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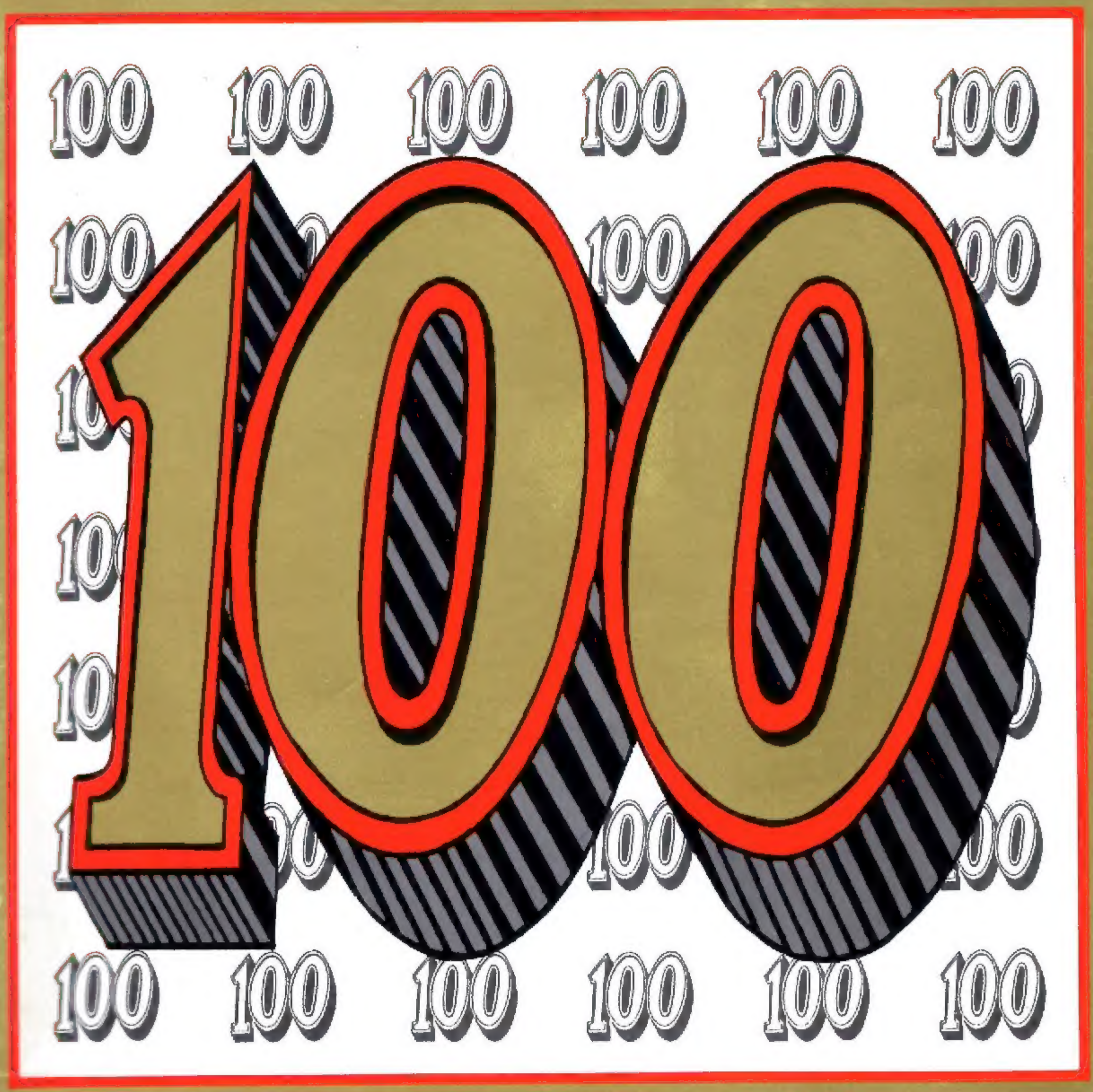

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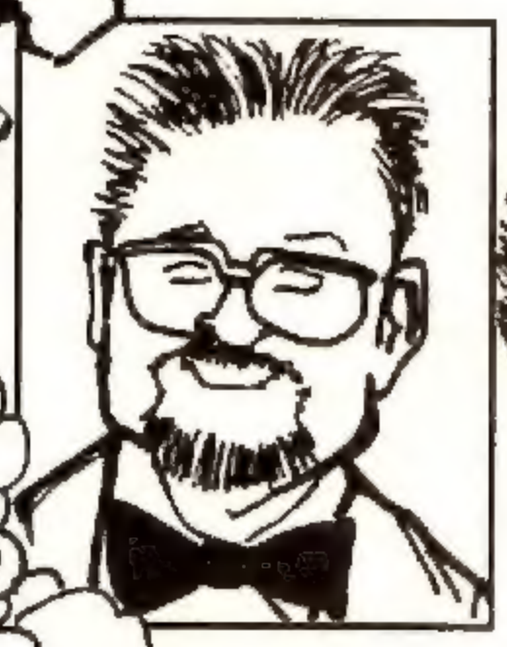

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UP FRONT

STOP THE PRESS!

For months I've made notes about the editorial for this epic issue #100, which was to have included a list of casualties and survivors in comics during all these years of INTERVIEW, plus an exhaustive examination of the results of our survey of CI readers, and more about the evolution of the industry over that turbulent period of time.

But it'll all have to wait for another, more appropriate time — even as this issue has had to wait for these words — which *follow* what we already thought was the absolute final stop-press update when we wrote the introduction to the POWER 100 feature.

In place of the intended editorial, I'm going to shift focus from a wide-angle overview of the comics field to a single individual who embodied and exemplified those changes.

She started her career editing for an independent publisher/distributor, now long-since bankrupted and reorganized; her roots grew out of a love for the field. Up from fandom, she took a position with Marvel in direct sales, helping to shape the tremendous growth and define the policies for what has now become the dominant means of comics distribution. She was intelligent, ambitious, cocky at times, and astonishingly articulate.

Her success advanced her corporate position and allowed her newer and bigger challenges and opportunities. And she was easily the equal of them all. Her loss to Marvel is more than significant . . . it's massive. Her loss to the industry is even greater. And her loss to those who knew her as an individual is beyond measure.

"If anything *else* happens between when these words are written and INTERVIEW #100 ships to stores — we don't want to know." Those words from the introduction to the POWER 100 suddenly sound hollow and somber, and serve as a reminder of how transitory are all our strivings. She didn't live to see the list, but I believe she would have liked being on it.

Carol Kalish is dead at age 37 — struck down in her prime. This issue of COMICS INTERVIEW #100 is hereby dedicated to her memory.

~Dan

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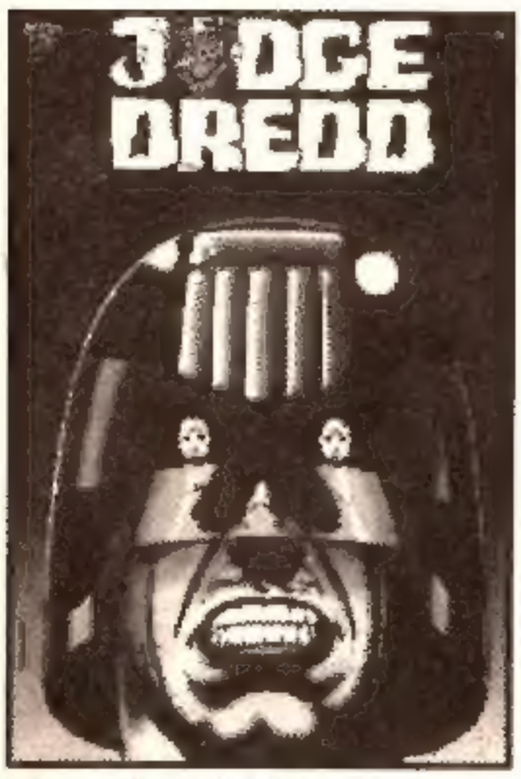

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CI-100

THE COMICS INTERVIEW POWER 100

This introduction is being written not in the so-called eleventh hour, nor even in the twelfth — but slightly beyond. It's the last thing to go into this 100th issue; the cover and the rest of the inside pages are already at the printer.

Way back when we planned this feature, there wasn't any way of knowing that the summer of 1991 would prove to be one of the most turbulent in memory, rife with sudden and major developments in the comics industry that would cause us to revise our rankings time and time again without warning.

It's all a chaotic jumble: First Comics announces refinancing. Rob Liefeld's X-FORCE breaks the sales record set by McFarlane's SPIDER-MAN. Oops, time to adjust the list. TSR puts the "comics/module" idea to death, and the comics line to sleep until spring. First Comics suspends shipping until further notice. Time to re-adjust the list. The new X-MEN #1 surpasses any reasonable expectation, breaking the recent X-FORCE record and doubling sales of SPIDER-MAN. Adjust again. Big time. OK, now we've got it worked out. No, wait — in a surprise upset, Chris Claremont quits! And — wait a week — Byrne is back! By now, surely, that's it. We're safe to go to press. No! While pages are actually at press, Disney announces drastic cutbacks in the comics line which will outdate our list before it even reaches readers.

What to do? This is perhaps the most eagerly anticipated issue of COMICS INTERVIEW ever; we don't want to delay another week . . . but we just can't let the presses roll, knowing the Disney story will hit the news before we hit the stands. A frantic flurry of phone calls and faxes back and forth to the typesetter with changes, updates and reappraisals. If anything else *happens between when these words are written and INTERVIEW #100 ships to the stores — we don't want to know.*

When we sat down to ponder the question of power within the field we realized that the comics industry is a multi-tier conglomeration of people with power existing at all levels. That's why you'll find not only CEOs and creative types but distributors and retailers and others on the list as well. And that power is anything but static, as we have observed first-hand this summer. One thing, and one thing alone, is for certain — change. The **POWER 100** *list will look a lot different by this time next year. The way things have been going, maybe by next month.*

Associate editor Charles Novinskie did the initial research, legwork, interviews and early draft of the list — but the thing took on a life of its own and ended up rolling in virtually everyone who stood in its path: editors, associates, interested and disinterested industry sources and all. We left no stone unturned in our quest to search out the powers that be: phone calls, mass mailings to comics pros, interviews and debates at conventions.

And one thing became clear. We would have to define what we mean by "power." Different people have decidedly different perspectives on what constitutes power in comics. Here are just some of the responses (anonymous of necessity, since we promised to protect our sources, which is why all quotes throughout the **POWER 100** *are not attributed):*

"Your idea for issue #100 is excellent.

"Also daunting.

"And frustrating.

"For me, an out-of-the-mainstream operative, any choice would reek of poetic innocence. A sound business mind is often bereft of poetry.

"Somewhere between the poles of power and creativity lies the true dynamo of the craft."

According to another veteran industry insider: "The comic-book industry is much like any other industry — in one *sense. In case you haven't looked around the country lately,* power = $! *So, those who have the money, or control the money, they are the most powerful. These are the ones that make the* big *decisions — not what color so-and-so's tights should be."*

Yet another put it this way: "I really don't know (or care) who the most influential people in comics are. I suspect that they are, unfortunately, the distributors and the collectors.

"Power is a different matter altogether. I suggest the old rule of thumb: who's making the most money? It ain't me. Probably somebody at Marvel we never heard of."

Somebody at Marvel we've all *heard of sees it like so: "You say being popular isn't a requirement to be on a list of the most influential people in comics — I disagree.*

"There are people out there who are respected, some even held in awe by their peers, who have to go outside the industry to earn a living because their work is not popular with the readers of comics."

There were acute observations: "When you talk powerful *it's a pretty small list, unfortunately. Now, if you said* "creative," *that's another story entirely!"*

There were abstract observations: "The ones with the ultimate power are the customers."

Or: "The bondholders of Ronald Perelman, Time-Warner, and Kohlbert Kravits Roberts Inc.: Should economic conditions continue to decline, the holders of so-called 'junk bonds' might put pressure on the issuers to cut costs, increase profits, or sell off underperforming operations."

There were biting observations: "The head honchos at Capital City and Diamond — they're in charge of deciding what sorts of products will actually end up on retailers' shelves. Revised policies on CODs will severely limit distribution of comics from anyone but the Big Two."

And: "The money people at Marvel and DC — those are the folks who want to squeeze out the other companies by churning out 'product' and by creating 'must-have' collector's item variations."

In the end, we settled on a definition that applies to both the business and creative sides of comics. Real power — not just the power to say no, which is the only *power some people have — is the power to say "yes" and/or make big things happen. And we restricted consideration to those who are actively engaged in using that power here and now, in 1991, not just those who hold* potential *power but choose not to exercise it in any meaningful way. Thus, the* **POWER 100** *is not a hall of fame, so do not be disappointed to find some of the most influential people in the history of comics are not on our list.*

Too, there is the question of scope. As one perceptive and highly-placed person put it: "My problem with your question is what is the 'comics industry?' I suspect that your question was meant to be limited to those people that are primarily involved in the comic-book industry."

This gave us pause for thought. Animation, single-panel cartooning, greeting cards and the like are also comics. Where to start? Where to leave off?

We made the decision, for better or worse, to limit our survey to comics with continuity. This results in the absence, for example, of THE FAR SIDE's Gary Larson from the list — but we had to draw the line somewhere.

We think it's important to remember before you begin reading the **POWER 100** *that power is not just money — it's influence.*

The time for speculation is over. What you are about to read is our controversial naming of the "Most Powerful People in Comics." Whether or not you agree with the ranking — or even the very premise, itself — this is one feature that you won't soon forget.

Nor will we!

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"*The* critical position for the entire industry."

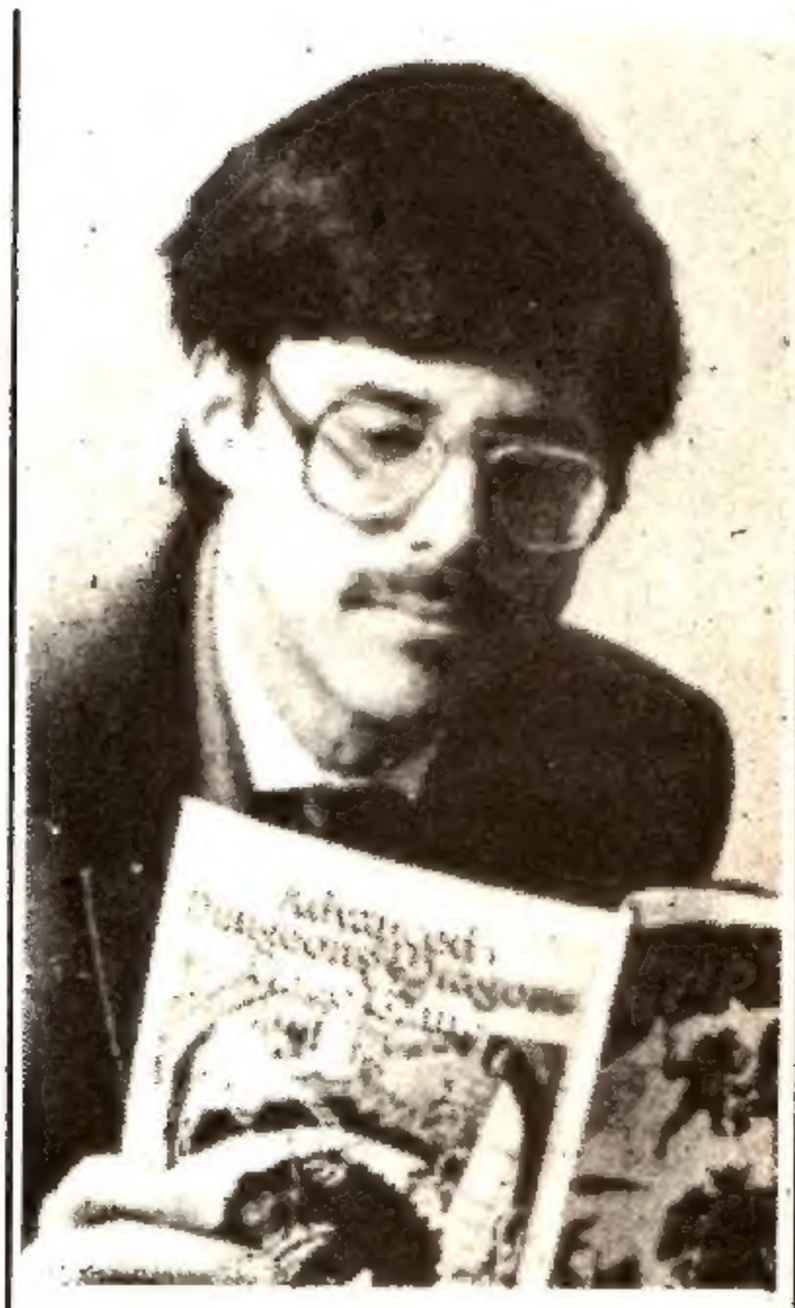
1

TERRY STEWART

PRESIDENT OF MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, THE LARGEST PRODUCER OF COMIC BOOKS WITH OVER 50% OF THE U.S. MARKET, HIS JOB AS ONE INSIDER NOTES DRILY, IS TO "KEEP THE GOLDEN GOOSE LAYING." STEWART replaced Jim Galton who, "while definitely being the most powerful individual in the business, didn't have the love for the comics industry that Terry expresses." Stewart is also an undaunted collector of comics and records and brings this awareness into play as an active president with a hands-on approach. Under his early guidance the company is enjoying explosive growth by exploiting to the utmost the direct market, the comics collector mentality and Marvel's strong brand-name loyalty — while untapped markets are being mapped for future development in an effort to propel Marvel to the level of a major multi-media entertainment group with a much broader and deeper base, as witness the appointments of Carol Kalish and, most recently, Jim Salicrup to development positions within the company. Stewart is still new to the job, so it's too early to tell how much he'll accomplish in the longer term but, according to one source, "He better do a good job, or we're all in trouble. The presidency of Marvel is, without a doubt, *the* critical position for the entire industry."

2 PAUL LEVITZ

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT & Publisher of DC Comics. Despite his low public profile and humble fan beginnings, Paul is the real power at DC. His experience in editorial and comics scripting, finance and business background, and familiarity with fandom substantially strengthen his power and influence as publisher. Levitz has lived through a lot of change in the comics industry — and been an instrumental agent in bringing much of it about. "DC decision maker" is the apt way one person put it; another observed: "Levitz at DC can say 'no' to anything he feels like, editorially and business-wise (advertising, format, subject matter, etc.)."



3 MIKE RICHARDSON

PUBLISHER AND OUTRIGHT owner of Dark Horse Comics, Richardson is also a comics retailer. The horsepower behind Dark Horse, he has demonstrated the determination to come from behind and drive his company into the number three publisher's spot in the direct sales market. A strong mix of top creative talent, licensed properties and shrewd business acumen have put Richardson in an industry power position right behind the Big Two. "Since that time five years ago, when Dark Horse truly lived up to their name, they have made very important business moves that have shot them into the comics forefront. Their success with making licensing products viable comics sellers for retailers has blazed a path that others have tried and failed to do in the past"

STEVE GEPPI

PRESIDENT, OWNER AND CEO of Diamond Comic Distributors, and a comics retailer, Geppi is one of the new breed whose background as a fan and collector has helped him rebuild and remold a moribund industry. Since his start, selling comics from a basement store, consistent sound business practices have built Diamond into "the Marvel of direct sales distributors," selling to over 50% of the market, with 22 distribution centers servicing some 3,000 comic-book stores nationwide and recent inroads into England and Europe. But as Geppi is learning, "with great power comes great responsibility"; he's one of the people who "can create excitement or kill any project," to quote a source. Another puts it plainly: "If Diamond doesn't carry a book, forget it."

4

TIM BURTON

MOVIE DIRECTOR. WHAT'S he doing on our list? "One successful movie has more impact on the nation's impression and receptiveness to comics than a year's output of most comic-book publishers. The BATMAN movie, the TURTLES TV show and THE SIMPSONS generated more public interest and dollars, and opened more doors to future projects than any recent comic book, comic strip, or cartoon. Consequently, movie producers and television executives that have the power to green-light media projects are the most powerful people in the comics industry even if they are only marginally connected to the comics industry." Another insider says Burton's work "blends the line between comics and cinema. His work is the most comic-book-like in achieving in live action what comics do in two dimensions." Burton's just begun BATMAN II.

5

6 STEVEN SPIELBERG

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER. What's *his* connection with comics? The new INDIANA JONES books from Dark Horse, for a start. But consider. There's more to it than that. The cause and effect on our field may be a bit less direct than Burton's BATMAN, but Spielberg has the kind of contemporary name recognition once commanded by Walt Disney during his lifetime, coupled with the financial boxoffice and creative clout to focus new effort and attention on comics — and is actively doing so, with projects such as AN AMERICAN TAIL and sequel or TV series, and FAMILY DOG with Tim Burton. TINY TOONS — on TV and, of course, in comics, too — revitalized the Warner Bros. characters for a new generation. Then there's the marriage of animation and live action in ROGER RABBIT (and the cross-company cartoon character crossovers). Plus persistent rumors of DC's BLACKHAWK with Dan Aykroyd, etc

7 JIM LEE

ARTIST AND MAN OF THE moment. Early work for Marvel included ALPHA FLIGHT and PUNISHER: WAR JOURNAL. Lee's artwork on UNCANNY X-MEN and the new X-MEN has made him a force to be reckoned with, both artistically and financially, setting all-time industry records at about 8,000,000 copies of all editions shipped so far of the new-issue #1. A mover and shaker at Marvel, credited by some with forcing Chris Claremont off X-Men and alleged by perhaps-envious others to be exhibiting signs of excessive ego, Jim also wields prestige and influence among his peers. "Destined to be a major power. X-MEN #1 will establish him forever as one of the *big boys*."

LORRAINE WILLIAMS

TSR, Inc.

PRESIDENT OF TSR, WHICH dominates role-playing gaming with ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and others, Williams also publishes paperback bestsellers, and co-controls the Buck Rogers character. TSR's properties have been successfully licensed to Saturday morning TV and to DC Comics. Despite a weak initial showing, TSR's recent foray into comics publishing promised a high success potential based upon her track records in related areas, and Lorraine Williams was an early (and strong) contender for the #1 spot on our list — until she put the comics operation on hiatus. As owner of TSR, with rumored sales of some $35,000,000. last year, Williams has clout and plenty of staying power — but does she have commitment? TSR promises a serious return to comics publishing with six titles in the first quarter of 1992.

KEVIN EASTMAN

SURE, THE TURTLES COME TO mind when you think of Eastman & Laird — but what about the investment power of Eastman? "Leader/Financier of the New England Gang — not only runs Tundra but has strong ties to Alan Moore and Dave Sim — put this group together and you have a Who's Who of the most important creators in comics east of the Mississippi. Eastman has the buck$." Projects such as BIG NUMBERS, VIOLENT CASES, and other non-traditional titles from Tundra show that Kevin's concern for creators' rights and quality independent comics is more than just talk. Success has given him power and influence — according to one respondent, Tundra is "the first alternative publisher with enough money to really market and promote its work" — and Eastman is putting his money where his mouth is.

10 FRANK MILLER

WRITER/ARTIST WITH A proven track record of past and present hits, his "name means sales which is an instant green light" Miller is also very highly regarded by his peers, "because he so greatly influences the work of aspiring cartoonists and sets a standard for what the comic-book publishers seek to imitate." The recipient of three Eisner Awards this summer for his work on GIVE ME LIBERTY, ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN and HARD-BOILED, Miller is also making his mark in movies, starting with the screenplay for last year's ROBOCOP 2 and continuing with the new ROBOCOP 3, now filming. Next he teams with artist Walt Simonson on THE TERMINATOR: ROBOCOP WARS for Dark Horse. According to one insider, "His welcome with the big two is a little worn at the moment. Dollar signs will make them forget."

11 MATT GROENING

THE COMICS SUCCESS STORY OF our times! From LIFE IN HELL to THE SIMPSONS, Groening has kept his conscience, stayed fresh and inventive, revitalized cartoons on television, and achieved near-celebrity status and mainstream success all at the same time. The man who brought us Bart Simpson and subverted the mass media to bring "eat my shorts" into common usage is a creative, cultural and commercial power not to be underestimated!

12 CHARLES SCHULZ

THE COMICS SUCCESS STORY OF all time! When something is as all-pervasive as PEANUTS it takes a special effort to stand back and perceive the assimilation of what has become a cultural institution into so many aspects and areas of our lives. PEANUTS is an industry unto itself, and through his gentle humor "many a truth spoken in jest" — Schulz exerts worldwide power with Charlie Brown and Snoopy

13 JEFF MONTGOMERY

CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF HARVEY Comics Entertainment at age 26, Montgomery used his experience raising capital for Columbia Pictures to put together financing in 1989 for his own $8,000,000 deal, then a year later sold a 20% interest to MCA, the parent company to Universal Studios — thus opening the way for merchandising, movies and more mass exposure for Casper, Richie Rich and friends. Announced for 1992 is a brand-new imprint for direct-sales-only comics featuring MAD MAX, DIE HARD, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and others.

14

TODD McFARLANE

WRITER/ARTIST. "McFARLANE could *draw* any title and increase sales, but that he has the power to demand to *write* a new #1 is amazing." Narrowly missed the Top Ten, but recently stepped down from SPIDER-MAN. McFarlane made sales history with a Marvel non-mutant character, pointing the way to this summer's record X-sales. "Anything he wants to do, he can. One of the few people in comics who can 'write their own ticket.'"

15

MIKE USLAN & BEN MELNIKER

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS. FOR 30 years a bigwig at MGM, Melniker knows the business of movies inside-out. Uslan came out of comics fandom, worked briefly for DC, and became a movie-industry attorney before forming a partnership with Melniker. The two of them made movie history with the blockbuster BATMAN movie. But they are also producers of the SWAMP THING movies and TV series, and have other comics-oriented projects in the works, including an animated FISH POLICE cartoon show and, of course, the sequel to BATMAN, now in production.

16

GARRY TRUDEAU

WRITER/ARTIST OF DOONESBURY. His power has slipped somewhat in recent times. Satire is sometimes an effective weapon against politics, which is deservedly so often the target, but despite a sharp and sardonic wit, Trudeau has the misfortune to be a liberal relic in an age of changing perceptions. It's also important to note that this is not a list of all-time influence or ranking in the industry, but of power or position in the field at present.

17

ROB LIEFELD

ARTIST WHO ALSO PLOTS HIS stories but (thus far) doesn't dialog. Big sales on X-FORCE #1 spell big attention and opportunities. According to at least one source, Rob "runs neck and neck with Jim Lee on artist power struggle chart." Like Lee, Marvel's mutants and a new #1 helped land him high on the list, but Liefeld's long-term standing depends on whether he can stabilize and sustain X-FORCE sales at a respectable level.

18

JOHN DAVIS & MILTON GRIEPP

CO-OWNERS OF CAPITAL CITY Distribution, with 17 service centers nationwide, Griepp and Davis may be #2 as direct distributors, but they're #1 when it comes to INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE, the monthly organ of industry analysis that sets the standards as a source of information about the field. Movers and shakers. One respondent called Griepp the "public voice of the IADD (International Association of Direct Distributors), a group trying to force all publishers and retailers to do business the IADD way."

19

JOHN BYRNE

WRITER/ARTIST. "KNOWS THAT his power has faded a bit, but he is using his power with more intelligence now. He realizes that you are only as good as your last book." Byrne's star is on the rise again with his recent assignment as writer of the X-Men — a series he once helped define as artist. "The King of the Revamps." As Byrne knows, the top is a slippery slope — can he keep his footing this time? Or as one pessimist put it: "Hey, when it comes to projects *not* getting done, he's the man!"

20
CHRIS CLAREMONT

WRITER. WHAT EFFECT CLAREMONT's departure from the mutant books will have on sales remains to be seen. "This could be the fall of the Claremont power stick. He's finding out that writers don't wield as much power as the artist/writers." Another respondent thinks otherwise: "Claremont has singlehandedly thrown a wrench into Marvel's entire 1991 business plan by quitting." The sales record he set on 16 years of Marvel's mutant books (8,000,000 copies of X-MEN #1 alone!) may never be broken. In a strong position to surprise us all — if he siezes the moment before short memories fade.

21
BARRY KAPLAN

THE "NUMBERS" MAN BEHIND THE scenes at Marvel. Kaplan has been there lots longer than most — no, all — the many editorial and management regimes that have come and gone. All the while, the company has continued over the years to grow and prosper under his watchful eye. Kaplan has crunched the numbers that make Marvel's royalty system work, and much more. Probably knows more about the nuts and bolts of the Marvel business machine than any other single individual inside or outside the company.

22
DAVE SIM

WRITER/ARTIST/PUBUSHER OF CEREBUS. Has power, talent & influence — and isn't shy about using them! One of the rarest of the rare, Sim has both business savvy and real creativity as a writer/artist plus something many of the others on this list don't: *independence.* His longevity in self-publishing is testimony to his commitment. "Picked up where Lee and Kirby left off in developing the novel use of the serial format." Prime proponent of creators' rights.

23
JOHN ROGERS & FAE DESMOND

PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER of the San Diego Comic Con Committee. "Under his direction, the largest congregation of comics retailers, distributors, publishers, and fans gather for business and fun." Rogers doesn't do it alone: "A staff of mainly volunteers, plus full-time general manager Fae Desmond, work yearround to make it all happen." The "networking" that takes place at San Diego helps tie the whole industry together.

24
JAN & DEAN MULLANEY

CHAIRMAN AND PUBLISHER OF Eclipse Comics, the brothers Mullaney are the business and the creative brains behind one of the earliest independents. "Although Jan has been Dean's partner for 13 years, it has only been in the last two that he has come out into the industry spotlight. Due to Jan's extra efforts and strong connections in both the book market and the entertainment field, Eclipse has been able to land many big-name talents."

25
ROBERT OVERSTREET

THE OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE serves as the bible for price structuring on back-issue sales and helps define trends within the collectors' market for comics. "Brought acceptability and defined standards to comics collecting; inspires continued interest in comics history." Despite all the controversy and competition, OVERSTREET is still the indisputable authority for retailers and collectors. The Quarterly Updates, featuring up-to-the-minute market feedback, consolidate Overstreet's position.

THE POWERS THAT (COULD) BE

STAN LEE: Living and working in California for Marvel, Lee is easily the most recognizable name not on the list. While Lee is certainly the spiritual leader for Marvel Comics he may be viewed more as a father figure to today's young readers who would more readily recognize the name Jim rather than Stan when Lee is mentioned. Plans for Lee to return to comics with his announced World of Tomorrow series were premature now that John Byrne has withdrawn from the project. Fans of Stan Lee may have to wait longer than "tomorrow" for his return to the limelight.

RICK OBADIAH: In 1990, First Publishing announced a quarterly publication schedule for their traditional line of superhero comics. In 1991, First cancelled all of their superhero books, leaving them with just two regular titles, CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED and LONE WOLF & CUB. Publisher Obadiah, looking to make advances outside of the traditional comics marketplace, may have lost a sizable share of the conventional buying public. First recently announced plans to restructure the company with an anticipated influx of $1.5 million to pay off $600,000 worth of debts, and put all operations on hold until further notice. Will Obadiah be back as a power player?

PETER LAIRD: As co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Laird has plenty of potential power — but the key word is "potential." It appears he's distanced himself from directly creating the TURTLES comics, and it remains to be seen what effect, if any, his substantial success will have on his comics career.

MOEBIUS: Internationally-acclaimed French artist Jean Giraud has influenced comics with a broad and respected body of works, but aside from an occasional contribution of late, his new comics output has dwindled. That may change if and when the major animated movie based on his works — and which has taken so much of his time — opens.

26
WENDY & RICHARD PINI

THE CREATIVE AND BUSINESS TEAM behind ELFQUEST and WaRP Graphics, this husband-and-wife pair met through the letters page of a comic book, pioneered self-publishing and built a strong property along the way. Their years of shared experience and independent staying power have earned them a high proportion of influence and respect in the industry and outside. "The offers they've *turned down* for ELFQUEST would amaze you."

27
KEITH GIFFEN

WRITER/ARTIST. SAY WHAT YOU will about his art "homages," and unhinged irreverence for established characters, but Giffen is a creative engine that drives DC — from plots, layouts and art on myriad books to concepts no one could otherwise ever have expected from DC, such as AMBUSH BUG and LOBO. If you isolated and unplugged the ideas and cashflow generated by Keith, DC's lights would be a lot dimmer

28
M. SILBERKLEIT & DICK GOLDWATER

CHAIRMAN AND PUBLISHER OF Archie Comics. Despite making some serious missteps with short-lived superhero forays into the direct sales market, they deserve acknowledgment for the innovative *Impact* imprint/licensing deal with DC that gives their dormant superhero characters new exposure. And don't underestimate the recognition value of Archie Andrews, Jughead and friends among the general public, especially young girls.

29

DENIS KITCHEN

PUBLISHER OF KITCHEN SINK Press and founder of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, Denis deserves top grades for both. "He's trying to keep up high quality while battling for shelf space. But he's showing how integrity can be maintained while doing so. His work with the Legal Defense Fund is underrated and important." Kitchen has also worked a co-publishing deal with DC and introduced an inventive array of ancillary products to adapt to a changing market for independents.

30

DAVE STEVENS

WRITER/ARTIST/PRODUCER OF THE ROCKETEER, Stevens has had a major impact on the ndustry with the release of the $40,000,000. Disney production based on his comic Not only for his spectacular good-girl artwork, and creation of the Rocketeer, but for his behind-the-scenes influence on keeping the movie faithful to the comic, and the possibility of two sequels still to come, Dave is a power in the industry Best of all, none of it's gone to his head. Stevens proves you can make it to the top and still be a nice guy

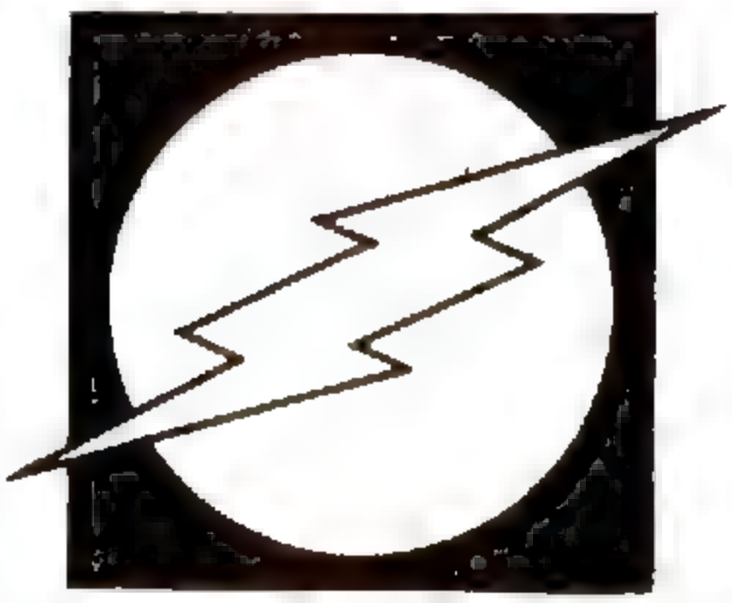
31

CAROL KALISH

"The smartest marketing presence in the industry." From Direct Sales Manager to Vice President of New Product Development for Marvel, "at one point it appeared that Carol Kalish was on track to become publisher, but she clearly has her sights set on bigger things. Her current position as VP of special projects allows her to take some risks and even be entrepreneurial in a corporate context. But the payoff, both for her and the company, could be huge if any of her ventures *really* take off"

32

PAUL DE MEO & DANNY BILSON



SCREENWRITERS/PRODUCERS OF TV's THE FLASH, and screenwriters who sold Disney on THE ROCKETEER movie, these two share an interest in comics and an ability to get properties produced. Yes, FLASH was cancel ed and, as yet, there's no final word on whether they'll get to make the other two parts of THE ROCKETEER trilogy — but considering how much they've been able to accomplish, so early in their careers, it's a good bet Bilson & De Meo, who take comics far more seriously than some producers, are sooner or later going to show us what they can *really* do.

33

JENETTE KAHN

PRESIDENT AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF of DC Comics. Under her control, DC has revamped many titles and taken a dramatic turn of direction since the more innocent days of the '70s (although sometimes contradictory, as witness her decision to kill the controversial SWAMP THING #88) Despite recent marketshare slippage, Kahn and company have brought us the Britpack, cross-company team-ups with characters such as JUDGE DREDD and PREDATOR and, for better or for worse, Piranha Press. It will be interesting to see how much "impact" DC's newest imprint will have on comics sales.

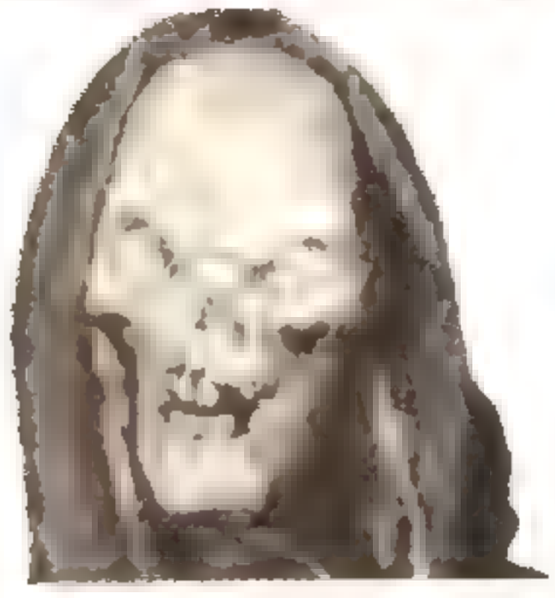
34

ALEXANDER & ILYA SALKIND

FATHER/SON PRODUCERS OF THE SUPERMAN and SUPERGIRL movies, they got off to a successful start on revitalizing comics' original superhero, but have slid downhill with each sequel and suffered a consequent loss of respect and box office. So what have they done lately? How about the SUPERBOY TV show — which, although it will end with the 100th weekly episode, is scheduled to return in the form of several two-hour TV movies.

35

R. DONNER & JOEL SILVER



PRODUCERS. DONNER, OF COURSE, directed the first and best of the SUPERMAN movies. Silver is reportedly producing a disparate spate of comics-inspired films from RICHIE RICH to WATCHMEN to SGT. ROCK. The two have teamed up with some other heavy hitters to adapt EC's classic TALES FROM THE CRYPT horror anthology idea to TV, with notable results. Rumors are they have other comics-related material in development for television, too.

36

R. STRADLEY & N. HANKERSON

EXECUTIVE EDITOR / VICE-PRESIdent of Operations at Dark Horse. Hankerson watches the bottom line: "He knows pretty darn well where Dark Horse will be with any project *before* it's put on the schedule." Stradley rides herd on the creative side. They edged out Marvel's DeFalco on the list because he inherited the biggest stable of comics characters and properties and they've had to generate their own. This quote came from outside the company: "Dark Horse has DC and Marvel quivering in their boots with both high sale items (ALIENS, PREDATOR, INDIANA JONES) and high-quality items (the Frank Miller projects, CONCRETE, etc.)."

37

TOM DeFALCO

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AT MARVEL COMics, DeFalco has the day-to-day say-so over decisions that affect what the fans will see. "He has the power to start or end any project. Any lame series he comes up with is an automatic 'go'." By virtue of size and clout in the market, Marvel is often the object of envy among others in the industry, but there is no arguing that the company has recently been stacking success upon success, and DeFalco has presided over the editorial side during much of this process.

38

IVAN SNYDER

PRESIDENT OF THE #3 DIRECT sales comics distributor, Heroes World, and retailer of the Superhero Enterprises stores. Formerly an executive at Marvel, Snyder left the company in the mid-'70s during the management shift that brought Jim Galton in, and struck off on his own. He has an insider's knowledge of the comics industry from the top down, and has demonstrated competitive staying power, surviving where others have failed. But can Snyder stay the course in the highly competitive market of the '90s?

39

BOB HARRAS

EDITOR OF THE X-MEN, AMONG others. "His office is a comics company unto itself. Probably makes more money for Marvel than any single person." He's got the power and he's definitely shown that he's not afraid to exercise it — or, as an inside observer bluntly puts it, "Bob Harras is a comer, especially after the Claremont departure."

40

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

WRITER/ARTIST. THE WOLVERINE "Weapon X" storyline in MARVEL PRESENTS by Windsor-Smith put the original comic-book CONAN artist back on the map in a big way. His name helps sell books, as other publishers are discovering. "Still an enormous talent, and 'Weapon X' got done *without* a Claremont stamp of approval." Interesting how so many define relative power in comics using Claremont as a gauge.

41
SIMON BISLEY

HE'S HOT. THE STYLIZED BRITISH Artist of the LOBO mini-series and forthcoming Judge Dredd/Batman crossover album is stacking up his own sales record and garnering attention and acclaim along the way. At this rate, it won't be long until Bisley can write his own ticket. If this artist were at Marvel, he'd be linked to a relaunch like McFarlane and Lee, and catapulted over the top.

42
ED PRESSMAN & C. LIPPINCOTT

PRODUCERS. PRESSMAN GETS movies made, and he's not ashamed of comics; metaphysical violence is his metier, from the CONAN movies to LONE WOLF & CUB, now in development (whether it's a success or failure will affect his comics industry power position). Lippincott will likewise move up the list if his JUDGE DREDD movie makes the grade; preproduction has begun, and the film is tentatively scheduled for release by 20th Century Fox in the summer of 1992.

43
DICK GIORDANO

VP-EDITORIAL DIRECTOR AT DC Comics. "Dick Giordano is still very influential, but only on editorial matters." Has a rapport with creators and still commands a certain respect based on his own background and accomplishments as a working professional, but his strong early position at DC has been eroding steadily and some feel he's being outflanked.

44
MARK GRUENWALD

AS EXECUTIVE EDITOR AT MARVEL, Gruenwald keeps his hand in the day-to-day business of shaping the Marvel Universe and has the know-how to get a new project off the ground. "A strong force in his own right." Sometimes criticized for letting his background as a comics fan dictate an overdue emphasis on continuity, a classic case of a great strength also being a weakness.

45
JOHN SKIPPER

Disney COMICS

VICE-PRESIDENT OF MAGAZINE publishing at Disney Skipper started in the top 10 and slid to this spot when word of a substantial downsizing at Disney Comics came in as we were about to go to press. Skipper hasn't scuttled the comics ship yet — but he's certainly cut back on the crew, and made quite a few titles walk the plank. We're not counting Disney out — their ship may still sail on — or it may be lost at sea, and Skipper with it.

46
BILL WATTERSON

WRITER/ARTIST OF THE CALVIN AND HOBBES comic strip, Watterson would be a lot higher on our list if he weren't currently on hiatus. Even so, his power and influence remain surprisingly strong and continue to grow with the release of his best-selling paperback collections, and reruns of the daily strip.

47

WALT SIMONSON

AS AN ENTERPRISING WRITER/artist, Simonson has earned attention and acclaim for his work on THOR and FANTASTIC FOUR among others, and can draw in fans on whatever title he takes over His stature and star are on the rise, and the announced TERMINATOR: ROBOCOP WARS with Frank Miller for Dark Horse should assure his stellar spot in the firmament. "Walt Simonson does a great job at whatever he tackles."

48

NEIL GAIMAN

WRITER. GAIMAN IS CURRENTLY garnering a lot of industry attention for his work on DC's SANDMAN series, and seems to have donned the mantle in mainstream comics that formerly belonged to Alan Moore. Gaiman is also a successful novelist and one of the few writers in comics whose work can eclipse the artists he's teamed with and generate interest in a book.

49

GEORGE PEREZ

WRITER/ARTIST WITH A DEVOTED following and a reputation for detail work that makes h m the premiere choice for superhero crossover events. Linked with the right project, Perez can generate powerhouse sales. "If he can curb a tendency to over-commit his time, and take care to pick a few high-prestige projects and really deliver, Perez could catapult his career onto a McFarlane level in no time flat."

50

ALAN MOORE

WRITER. "LEGITIMIZED COMICS as literature with WATCHMEN" But his self-published BIG NUMBERS hasn't quite pulled in the big numbers in direct sales. Business may not be Moore's strong suit, someth ng that could be remedied by the co-publishing deal recently struck with Tundra. Since he's more-or-less sworn off comics, his place on the list is consequently lower — but announcing a ma,or new mainstream project is all it would take to put Moore back near the top.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW—?

R. CRUMB: The last we heard, France. While Crumb's classic work continues to be collected and reissued, and his reputation grows, his current output comes in dribs and drabs. Will he surprise us with some secret project on which he's even now at work?

SAM HAMM: Enjoyed acclaim and influence in the comics industry for his BATMAN screenplay — but his draft for BATMAN II has reportedly been dropped, and despite word that his ending is allegedly better than Alan Moore's, his WATCHMEN screenplay is in limbo. Until they're produced, his effect on comics is in the past tense.

HARVEY KURTZMAN: Another whose influence helped shape the industry — and who has also lent his name to the Harvey Awards — his most memorable work for many years has been "Annie Fanny." Now making a comics comeback with the recently-revived TWO-FISTED TALES.

DENI LOUBERT: Former publisher of Aardvark-Vanaheim and founder of the now-dormant Renegade Press, which published some interesting independent material during its active phase, Loubert is currently an account executive at the advertising agency of Aldrich & Associates, where she continues efforts to advance the cause of comics.

BUD PLANT: Once among the earliest and most influential of the direct-sales distributors, Plant sold out to Diamond and through his catalog mail-order business now "acts as a supply mechanism to offset the limitations of the direct market."

LEN WEIN: Former editor-in-chief at Disney Comics, Wein is now "between jobs." His star will rise again, no doubt, but at press time his power base stands somewhere between "seriously eroded" and "nonexistent."

51

WILLIAM M. GAINES

PUBLISHER. WHILE GAINES REmains publisher of MAD magazine, his real power rests with the treasure trove of classic properties such as TALES FROM THE CRYPT, the entire EC line and, of course, MAD that he controls and actively exploits via licensing to comics, TV and other media.

52

LEE SALEM

VICE-PRESIDENT AND EDITORIAL Director of Universal Press, which syndicates CALVIN & HOBBES, DOONESBURY, THE FAR SIDE and other top strips to newspapers. "The editors are the ones who exercise the real power to make-or-break at the syndicates," and it would seem Salem has been making some right decisions.

53

GARY GROTH & KIM THOMPSON

EDITORS/PUBLISHERS OF FANTAgraphics, Eros and Monster Comics. Groth has been called "the undisputed king of moral outrage," and Thompson "picks up where Groth leaves off," but they both place here "not only for the sorts of comics they publish, but for their influence, THE COMICS JOURNAL and AMAZING HEROES."

54

JAY KENNEDY

COMICS EDITOR AT KING FEAtures, which syndicates BLONDIE, BEETLE BAILEY, HAGAR, ERNIE and scores more. "Dedicated to the art form, he nevertheless has to appease publishers who want ever-simpler, smaller strips targeted to demographic market segments." Has yet to really make his mark.

55

DON & MAGGIE THOMPSON

CO-EDITORS OF THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE. One insider says, "Its influence is unquestionable." Another agrees: "By controlling the news, they exert an incredibly powerful influence over the industry. Also, Don's reviews are often the only publicity that a book gets."

56

JOE KUBERT

ARTIST AND FOUNDER OF THE Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, his illustrious art career in comics has won him respect and acclaim, and his influence on the industry continues to grow. "There are more Kubert School graduates every year."

57

NEAL ADAMS

ARTIST/PUBLISHER. "INNOVATED most widely emulated storytelling mode after Lee & Kirby, instrumental in redefining professional relations within the industry." His Continuity Studio functions as a de-facto school for artists and Adams' publishing and licensing activities (BUCKY O'HARE) make him a force in comics.

58

MARK FREEDMAN

SURGE LICENSING'S FREEDMAN "wants one or more properties to keep his company going should the Turtles prove to be a passing fancy. He has picked up rights to several independent comics characters, but will any of them (or all of them combined) be another Turtles?"

59

JIM STARLIN

WRITER/ARTIST. ONE OF A HANDful of "double threat" creators in comics, from the controversial death of Robin at DC to Marvel's INFINITY GAUNTLET and WARLOCK, Starlin has major superhero sales power.

60
BUDDY SAUNDERS

RETAILER AND "DE-FACTO CONservative leader." Saunders is known for his outspoken (and sometimes unpopular) opinions, but according to those in the know, "has the single best-run comics chain in North America" with eight Lone Star Comics stores in the Texas area.

61
BILL SIENKIEWICZ

ARTIST. PROJECTS SUCH AS BIG NUMBERS put him on the cutting edge of the industry. Sienkiewicz is one of the "handful of comics creators who can shape the medium because they are hot sellers or fan favorites and can mold the direction or content"

62
MIKE FRIEDRICH

PRESIDENT OF STAR*REACH PRODuctions. Friedrich acts as agent for comics creators such as Paul Chadwick, Roy Thomas, P. Craig Russell, Tom Veitch and others. Friedrich was also instrumental in the creators' rights movement.

63
STEVE RUDE

WINNER OF THIS YEAR'S EISNER Award for best artist, Rude came out of the independents and is now making his mark at the majors. "The most powerful people in comics are those artists that influence lots of other artists to draw in a certain style."

64
DAVID CAMPITI

IN CHARGE OF INNOVATION. AFTER A checkered history among various independents, Campiti seems to have clicked with a line of licensed horror titles, including among them INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE, PSYCHO and PHANTOM OF THE OPERA.

65
PAUL DAVIS

IN CHARGE OF MILLENNIUM, WHICH also publishes such licensed properties as Anne Rice's THE MUMMY, DOC SAVAGE and TV's THE WILD, WILD WEST. Davis has been making his mark. But in this uneasy era for independents, can Millennium build and sustain marketshare?

66
DAVE McKEAN

BRITISH ARTIST OF CAGES, VIOLENT CASES and ARKHAM ASYLUM, among others. McKean is rapidly making a name for himself in American comics. His strong style gives him the power of artistic influence.

67
BOB CHAPMAN

HEAD HONCHO OF GRAPHITTI Productions, which not only produces licenses merchandise from the majors, but doesn't always stick to what's safe and has actively endorsed the independents, too. Chapman's high standards and prestige publications have earned him power and respect.

68
DAVE GIBBONS

"THE RINGO STARR OF COMICS artists." Gibbons may not be the flashiest new artist on the block — but it must be more than coincidence that he collaborates with such top guys as Moore and Miller and co-created WATCHMEN, a comics milestone.

69
WHILCE PORTACIO

ARTIST OF UNCANNY X-MEN AND interim co-plotter of X-FACTOR. Along with Jim Lee and Scott Williams at Homage Studios, Portacio makes up the current creative ruling triumvirate of Marvel's core mutant characters.

70
RON TURNER

PUBLISHER/DISTRIBUTOR LAST Gasp has outlived the era of underground comix and expanded into mail-order sales and distribution for 160 other publishers, while continuing to publish ZIPPY and many another. Turner also gains points for his strong and consistent anti-censorship stance and commitment to ecology.

71
JIM SHOOTER & S. MASSARSKY

THE EDITORIAL AND MARKETING team at Valiant. Massarsky "discovered" Cyndi Lauper and managed the Allman Bros. Band. Shooter wrote and edited for Marvel and DC. Valiant publishes primarily licensed properties: Nintendo and wrestling-based comics and old Gold Key characters.

72
TONY CAPUTO

FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER OF NOW Comics. Caputo has managed to reorganize the company under the auspices of B.J. Acquisitions, Inc. Time and sales will determine the viability of the restored Now Comics and titles such as THE GREEN HORNET, MARRIED . . . WITH CHILDREN and THE TWILIGHT ZONE.

73
ART ADAMS

THIS FAN FAVE ARTIST ADDS HIS own unique style to whatever story he touches — and that equates to increased sales. Were Adams to stay with one series for awhile and build on an already strong base, he would no doubt move far up the list.

74
TIM TRUMAN

WRITER/ARTIST/PUBLISHER OF 4Winds Studios. Truman has a strong following. "Has editors scared. Very business-minded due to being a publisher and a packager. Very intimidating with editors and publishers." HAWKMAN for DC and Wolverine for MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS help bolster his mainstream credibility and name recognition.

75
FRED TODD

PRESIDENT OF RIP OFF PRESS. Todd is a veteran of the early underground years, which are still reflected in such titles as FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS, but he's not stuck in the past and Rip Off also publishes contemporary comics by Matt Howarth and many others.

76
CARL POTTS

ARTIST/EDITOR IN CHARGE OF Marvel's *Epic* imprint, Potts is responsible for giving breaks to people such as Jim Lee and Whilce Portacio. His power and position are enhanced by an ability to spot new talent.

77
ART YOUNG

EDITOR OF DISNEY'S NEWLY-announced *Touchmark* imprint for creator-owned properties, and formerly an editor at DC, Young has plenty of potential to place higher on the list when he gets going. "Let's see what Art Young comes up with." And whether it sells through.

78
CLIVE BARKER

BETTER KNOWN FOR HIS HORROR books and films, adaptations of this writer's works into comics have made him a power in the field. Barker "embodies what is happening with the comics industry: a crossover into other media," and has vowed to be an active voice for comics in the outside world

79
DAVID SCROGGY

HIS EFFORTS HAVE BUILT THE SAN Diego Comic Book Expo into the major trade show for publishers, merchandisers, distributors and retailers. "Big guys meet little guys. Major projects are unveiled. Deals are struck." And retailers learn how to become better at business, too.

80
F. MOULY & A. SPIEGELMAN

AS WRITER/ARTIST, SPIEGELMAN has made a name for himself with MAUS while helping legitimize comics as literature, and as Editor/Publisher along with Francoise Mouly has showcased cutting-edge comics in RAW, an anthology magazine. Exercises enormous influence on opinion, in and outside the field.

81
BERND METZ

PUBLISHER OF CATALAN COMMUnications. With translations of more than 100 graphic novels by European artists such as Manara and Bilal in print, and four more titles each month for mature readers, Metz is indeed the premier publisher of such material in the English language.

82
RUSS COCHRAN

A MIX OF ART-ORIENTED PUBLISHing and inventive marketing has resulted in THE COMPLETE EC LIBRARY, Carl Barks prints and collections, TALES FROM THE CRYPT and so much more, making Cochran a pioneer and a power in identifying, developing and serving the collectors' market.

83
PETER DAVID

WRITER. DAVID BEGAN HIS COMics career at Marvel in marketing, and has brought a rare combination of productivity and creativity to bear upon his scripting for a diversity of publishers from First to Marvel, DC, Disney and others. Affects industry opinion via his weekly column in COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE.

84
CHUCK DIXON

WRITER, MOST RECOGNIZED FOR the "new Robin" mini-series. "Probably the best business mind among the big-name creators. Is working for almost every publisher. Very good editorial relations. Will be recognized as the top writer in the industry within the next two years."

85
BRUCE HAMILTON

PUBLISHER OF HAMILTON COMICS, a new horror line in the EC tradition, Bruce is a veteran partner of Gladstone and Another Rainbow along with Russ Cochran, and brings his own experience and appreciation for classic comics to creating all-new entries in the field

86
CHANTAL D'AULNIS

AS EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT OF Business Affairs for DC Comics, D'Aulnis is in charge of new property acquisitions, and she was instrumental in setting up the Warner Bros. cartoon characters for European markets, among many other behind-the-scenes licensing deals.

87
BYRON PREISS

PUBLISHER/PACKAGER OF BYRON Preiss Visual Publications, he produces comics material for a wide variety of mainstream book publishers, including the Bank Street Books, the RAY BRADBURY CHRONICLES, Asimov's ROBOT CITY and the revival of TWO-FISTED TALES.

88
MICHAEL GOLDEN

ARTIST AND CO-CREATOR OF BUCKY O'HARE. Golden enjoys acclaim for his rather infrequent comics work, but harnessed to the licensing onslaught of BUCKY O'HARE that's to ensue on TV and in toys, his power quotient has just been multiplied manyfold.

89
GRANT MORRISON

PART OF THE BRITISH INVASION OF writers who are changing the way readers perceive the medium of comics, Morrison is making his mark and commanding industry attention with his work on such unlikely titles as ANIMAL MAN, DOOM PATROL and, perhaps most controversial of all, ARKHAM ASYLUM.

90
LOU BANK & MATT RAGONE

BANK IS THE "MOVER AND shaker" in charge of Marvel's direct sales. Ragone is in charge of DC Comics circulation. Together, they "rank in the top 100 due to their behind-the-scenes deals and the contacts that they have built up."

91
MIKE PETERS

WRITER/ARTIST OF THE SYNDI-cated MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM comic strip. Peters has steadily been enhancing his position with lots of merchandising licenses, and now that the Grimmy character is coming to TV we'll be seeing a lot more of his work — and influence — in our lives.

92
BILL SCHANES

VICE-PRESIDENT OF PURCHASING for Diamond Comic Distributors. Schanes was co-founder of Pacific Comics and, with his background as a publisher and distributor, has an insider's understanding of the industry. "Improved personality. Shakes a big stick with publishers."

93
WILLIAM P. MARKS

PUBLISHER OF VORTEX COMICS, "oldest and largest full-line comic-book publishing company in Canada." Marks has made his mark with MR. X, YUMMY FUR and BLACK KISS. Recently, Vortex has had surprising success with LEGENDS OF NASCAR and other licensed spin-offs while continuing to publish its alternative line

94
ANDY HELFER

NEWLY-APPOINTED EDITOR OF DC'S *Piranha* imprint. Helfer brings his veteran years as a writer/editor to the position, along with a reputation for rapport with creators. "No one discovers and keeps talent like Andy."

95
CINDY MARKS

"SHE CAN GIVE YOU BIG PLAY or no play." Marketing Manager at Capital City Distribution, Marks oversees all publishers' listings in the sales catalog. "Though there are technically more 'powerful' people at Capital, it is Cindy who gets results — hey, I wouldn't cross her."

96

BOB KEENAN & S.QUARTUCCIO

IN CHARGE OF THE U.S. PUBLISHING operations of Fleetway/Quality Comics. Keenan and Quartuccio help to bring Judge Dredd and other British comics greater exposure in America and are aggressively engaged in expanding awareness and marketshare at the moment.

97

CHUCK ROZANSKI

PRESIDENT OF THE MILE HIGH comics retail chain, former distributor Rozanski is known for one of the most pristine mint finds of Golden Age comics, which became known as the Mile High Collection and set new grading standards. Also exercises influence through MILE HIGH FUTURES and N.I.C.E.

98

ROBERT CRAIG

LIAISON BETWEEN WORLD COLOR Printing and all the comic-book publishers. Craig has an extraordinary ability to solve problems. Prior to that, he was in charge of production for all comics printed at World Color. "Most importantly, he really cares that the comics industry survives and prospers."

UP AND COMERS

LYNDA BARRY: "Because she influences so many young cartoonists and is opening new doors of expression for cartoonists."

BOB BURDEN: Recently received up-front money for a development deal to peddle FLAMING CARROT to the movies, and exercises influence out of all proportion to the CARROT circulation owing to an incredible networking system in the industry.

MIKE CARLIN: "The focus of Superman and the improved quality of the four comics is due almost entirely to the tireless devotion of Carlin. It is the observation of this DC insider that Carlin's power, like that of his character, is growing." There is an opposition perspective: "Since he controls Superman, Mike Carlin possesses a certain amount of power, but probably a lot less than he thinks."

STEVE GURSKY & VINCE LETTERIO: "The prototypical new-style comics retailer" and his manager, "a real mover, shaker and doer, but so far, from a back seat."

ADAM HUGHES: Artist whose work is catching a lot of "ayes" from inside the industry and out.

ANDY & ADAM KUBERT: These siblings are taking mainstream comics by storm. In the works by Andy: WOLVERINE: RAHNE OF TERRA (for Marvel, w/Peter David). By Adam: CLASH (for DC, w/Rick Veitch). By both: BATMAN VS. PREDATOR (w/Dave Gibbons).

JIM SALICRUP: Editor of last year's record- and trend-setting new SPIDER-MAN title, among others, now recently named to a position created just for him as Marvel's new product developments editor.

BRIAN STELFREEZE: His stylish cover art keeps cropping up everywhere from Marvel to Dark Horse to TSR to Millennium's new DOC SAVAGE (not to mention CI's own CYCOPS series). When he makes his mainstream storytelling debut in 1992 with the fully-painted pages of THIS YEAR'S GIRL from DC/Piranha — watch out!

99

DAVE OLBRICH

PUBLISHER OF MALIBU, MOTHER of many imprints. Despite certain associations, Olbrich is acknowledged by some in the industry for "making the best of a sorry mess." As one put it, "He's taken a basket case and made it into a viable publisher" How long it will last still remains to be seen.

100

WILL EISNER

WRITER/ARTIST. "WEARS ALL professional hats, an inspiration to every generation of comics creators." Best known for THE SPIRIT, Eisner continues creating new graphic novels, has lent his name to the industry's coveted Eisner Awards, and as an interested and reasoned spokesman acts as "the conscience of the industry."

WRITER
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
$1.50 AUS
274
JUNE
$1.00 US
264
LATE JULY
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
$1.00 US
275
MAY
EXECUTION

"I'll let you know when I start to feel something."

CHRIS CLAREMONT

It's sort of funny the way certain things stick with you forever — take issue #94 of X-MEN, for example. I had just graduated high school in a small mining community in northeastern Pennsylvania when I picked up that now infamous issue. Chris Claremont had taken a book that was a hodgepodge of reprints from earlier issues and made it into something memorable. Who could have guessed that seventeen years later he would still be crafting tales of everyone's favorite mutant: Chris did for Marvel what Bartles and Jaymes did for wine coolers; in fact, try to picture Marvel without the mutant population that Claremont so craftily built over a decade and a half of storytelling.

The total irony is that the majority of today's readers weren't even born when Chris began writing the series. There were plenty of changes, artistically, editorially — even the cast of characters continued to change and grow — but through it all, Claremont maintained his unprecedented run.

And now as the mutants undergo yet another metamorphosis, with the addition of a new X-MEN book, they do so at long last without the guidance of Chris Claremont.

Indeed, today's readers are witnessing the end of an era!

I managed to catch up with Chris at the 1991 San Diego Convention held July 4-7, 1991. His popularity was apparent in the long lines at the numerous signings he attended over the course of the convention. It was interesting to see Chris Claremont, the professional, at work. After signing literally thousands of comics he still had time to put on a writing workshop that was as informative and educational as it was witty.

It was during the signing at the Mile High booth that I finally managed to catch up with the whirlwind of activity that was Claremont. I'm sure Chris was wary of seeing the cowboy hat that now seemed to follow him from booth to booth during the convention. The interview may have been a clever ploy on his part to make me go away . . .

. . .but two things will stick with me from this year's convention. The first: seeing Chris Claremont, who had been signing autographs for two solid hours, take time, during a break, to pose with two small boys dressed in homemade Wolverine costumes while the mother's camera clicked away. A classy act, I thought to myself. And the second: the fact that I was witness to the end of an era . . .

CHARLES NOVINSKIE: *How does it feel to not be writing X-MEN after an unprecedented seventeen years on the book?*

CHRIS CLAREMONT: I don't know — I'll let you know when I start to feel something about it.

CHARLES: *It hasn't sunk in yet?*

CHRIS: Not really, it's really been a very recent decision.

CHARLES: *Was there a particular artist that you really enjoyed working with?*

CHRIS: That's tough to answer when

Jim Lee and Scott Williams

All artwork accompanying this interview copyright ©1991 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc

"Mainstream comics are totally out of control of

you've worked with a collection of artists that includes **Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, Brent Anderson, Paul Smith, John Romita Jr., Marc Silvestri, Alan Davis, Barry Windsor-Smith, Walt Simonson, Art Adams, Brian Bolland, Bill Sienkiewicz,** and **Jim Lee.** You know, it's fairly mind boggling to think about working with that group of people When you work with a collection of artists that varied and that good, picking favorites is difficult. On one level, time tends to gloss over whatever slights or frustrations that seemed paramount at the time. On another level, it makes you appreciate that much more the skills and talents of those you were working with at the time you were working with them.

CHARLES: *Were there any particular storylines you pursued because of the artist on the X-MEN at that time?*

CHRIS: Sure. For instance, if it weren't for the synergism between **John Byrne, Roger Stern,** and myself we probably wouldn't have come up with the Dark Phoenix storyline. Things like **Frank Miller** and I sitting in a traffic jam on I-5 and trying to figure out the character of Wolverine for the WOLVERINE limited series, which was and is, I think, a provocative and powerful piece of work; me and Weezie and **Walter Simonson** sitting up two nights running, all night, in their apartment, plotting the X-MEN/TEEN TITANS. Looking back over that long a time it's tough to pick and choose.

CHARLES: *You had to re-write the Dark Phoenix saga because you originally didn't plan on killing her off.*

CHRIS: Jim Shooter made an executive decision that Phoenix had to pay for the crime she committed. **Louise Simonson** and I decided that, if she had to pay, she would pay with her life. Again, that happened to be one of those happy synergistic moments where we made the right decision almost in spite of ourselves. That's the zen of good publishing, where something happens that was unexpected and unplanned and yet, in retrospect, happened at exactly the right moment. The right decision, the right event, at the right moment. Of course, a few years later Jim made a decision that was in my opinion equally wrong, and that's the other side of the situation.

CHARLES: *You're of course talking about Shooter's decision to revive Jean Grey. How did you feel about the character being revived?*

CHRIS: I told Jim, in no uncertain terms, that I thought it was a mistake. There again, as editor-in-chief, he thought it was his responsibility to make the initial decisions. The rules that applied to the death of Jean Grey also applied to the decision to revive her. It was a policy decision that he made as editor-in-chief and he was willing to stand by it. I disagreed with it but that was his decision. My responsibility as an employee was to respect his decision. Basically, certain things happen in mainstream comics that are totally out of control of the creators and you either learn to live with it or you learn to walk away.

CHARLES: *Would the Jean Grey situation fall into the category of a low point in your run on X-MEN?*

CHRIS: I would certainly say, without a doubt, that the low point in my career on X-MEN is leaving the X-Men. You don't invest seventeen years of your life in a project and then walk away with a smile on your face and a tap dance on your feet. There are aspects of me that are

Pencil art by Marc Silvestri

creators. You learn to live with it or you walk away."

happy to go — but there are other aspects that wish it never happened. On the other hand, it did happen, so there's no point in saying, "Woe is me, woe is me." It wouldn't serve me any purpose and it certainly wouldn't serve Marvel any purpose; it won't make them feel good, bad or indifferent.

CHARLES: *Why did you leave the book?*

CHRIS: What happened is that I left — period!

FEMALE FAN: *Hi, are you Chris' wife? (Looking at an employee of Mile High Comics as Chris' wife looks on.)*

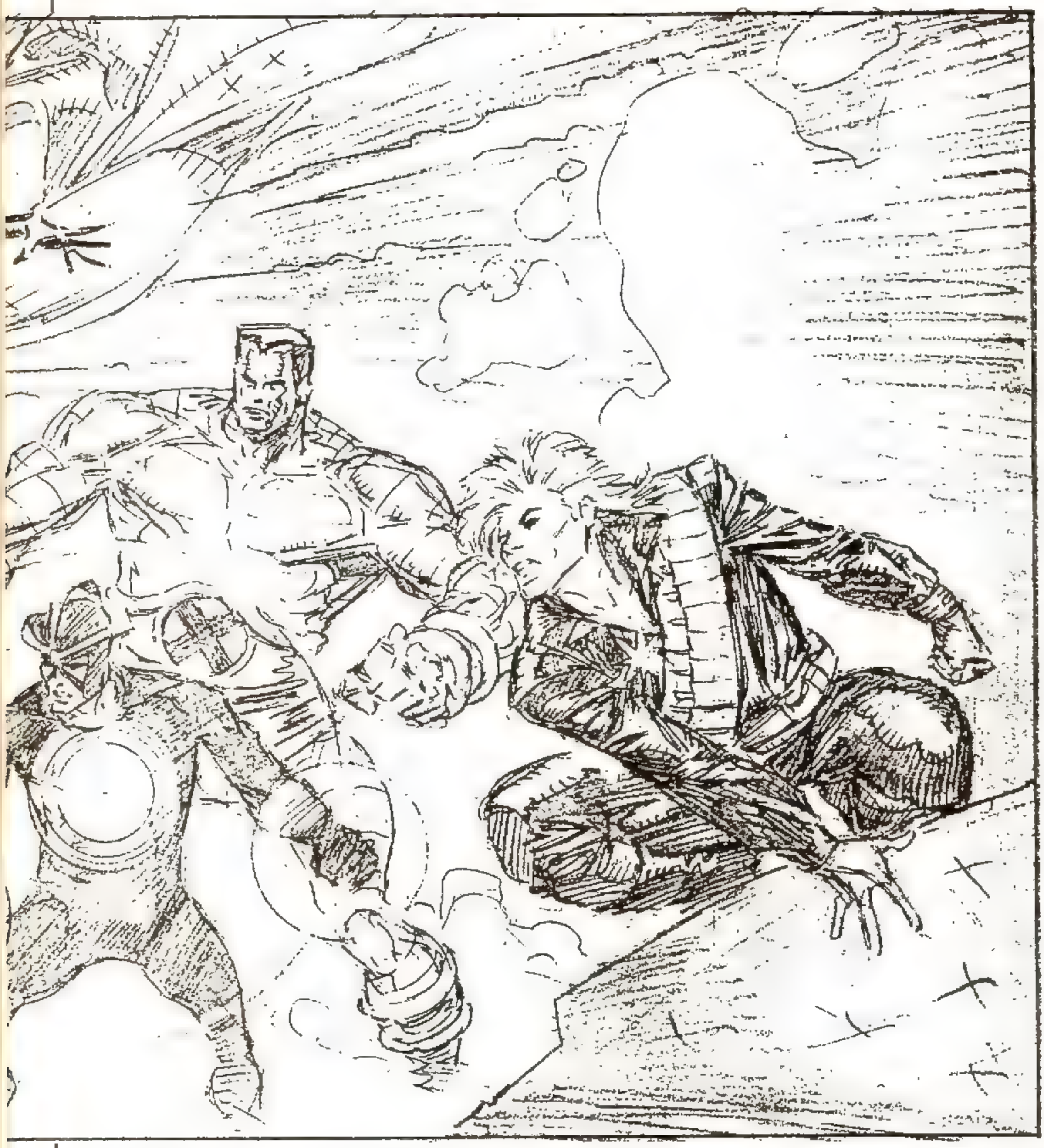
CHRIS: *(Laughter from all sides.)* Did I somehow step into the Twilight Zone? *(More laughter.)* Where was I?

CHARLES: *Let's change gears. Now that we've sorted out who your wife is, what can we look forward to in the new X-MEN title?*

CHRIS: I'm on that book for the first three issues. What we're trying to do is re-establish the book for new readers and revitalize it for long-time readers. Basically, the parameters are the same as the original series, a school for gifted youngsters, run by a crippled telepath, Magneto as the arch villain. The teams will consist of thirteen characters divided between two books.

CHARLES: *Any plans for future work from Marvel?*

CHRIS: Plenty. I'm working on an EXCALIBUR graphic novel for **Terry**



SOME OF CHRIS CLAREMONT'S CO-CONSPIRATORS:

1. The New Beginning: Gil Kane and Dave Cockrum 2. X-MEN #268: Jim Lee and Scott Williams 3. X-MEN #205: Barry Windsor-Smith 4. X-MEN #137 cover: John Byrne and Terry Austin 5. X-MEN ANNUAL #9: Art Adams and Austin 6. X-MEN #241: Marc Silvestri and Dan Green 7. X-MEN #279: Andy Kubert and Williams 8. X-MEN #175: Paul Smith 9. X-MEN/TEEN TITANS (one-shot): Walt Simonson and Austin 10. X-MEN ANNUAL #7: Mike Golden and Tom Mandrake

1

2

YOU!
NICE TO SEE YOU'VE LOST NONE OF YOUR EDGE, PRINCESS.
WOLVERINE--I COULD HAVE--!
NNARLY--!!
WHICH IS WHY I TOOK THE PRECAUTION OF REMOVIN' YOUR WIDOW'S BITE, TASH, WHEN I PUT YOU TO BED.
AND MADE SURE T' SIT OUT OF REACH.
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
BETTER THAN YOU LOOK, I'LL WAGER.

3

10

9

WHILE STORM HAS BREATH AND POWER TO DEFY YOU!
5

4

SPECIAL DOUBLE-SIZE ISSUE!
X-MEN
PHOENIX MUST DIE!

6

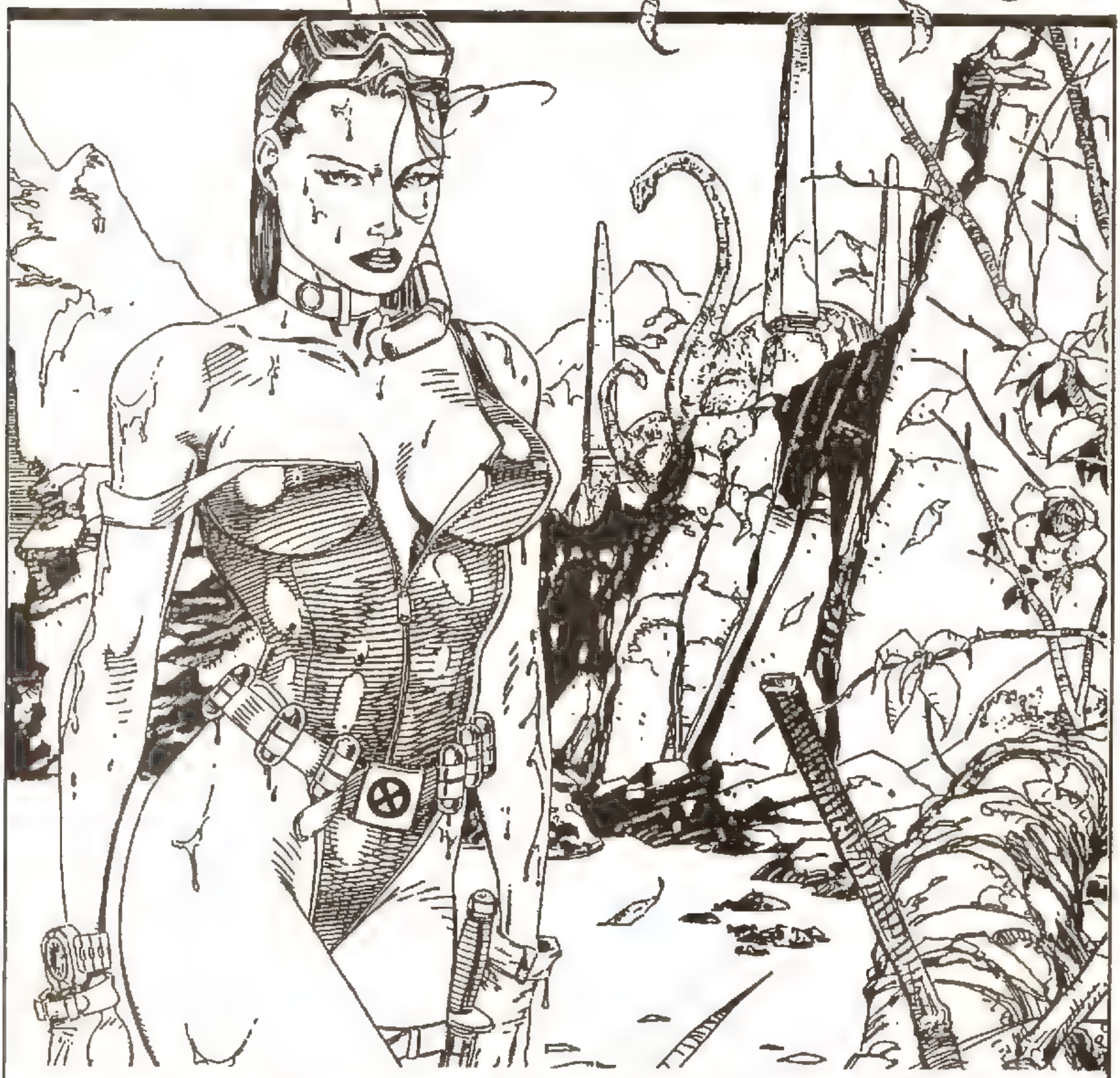
IN MY HEART AND SOUL...
... I BURN.
I WANT TO JOIN THE OTHERS...
LET MYSELF BE CONSUMED...
...BY THIS MAGICKAL, UNNATURAL INFERNO
BUT I RESIST.

8

YOU'RE NOT EVEN PHOENIX, X-MEN!
THAT IS ROGUE'S VOICE -- IN MY HEAD!
HIYA, PETE!
IT'S CYCLOPS. CAN'T CHA SEE?! WE'VE BEEN SUCKERED!
HOW DO WE KNOW THIS AIN'T A TRICK?

7

"I'm doing work for DC. My new novel is out in August."



Kavanagh, along with some special projects involving the X-Men and Wolverine. I'm also doing some work for DC, and my new novel will be out in August.

CHARLES: *This would be a good time to plug your new book.*

CHRIS: It's basically a sequel to FIRST FLIGHT, and it picks up where the first book left off, actually about six months later. The book is titled GROUNDED and it features the heroine, Lt. Shea, who has returned to Earth, is stripped of her astronaut's rating and has been deemed psychologically unfit for flight. The book covers her emotions and how she deals with being grounded. She has to deal with her new status; in part as a hero and in part as a junior officer with more "umph" than most junior officers have. A little bit of everything, a murder mystery with a little love, a little hate — drama. It will be out by August.

CHARLES: *Getting back to X-MEN, now that you're off the title will you read the book?*

CHRIS: Probably not, at least not for the first six months or so. It takes a while for the voices to die. What I would do is end up reading the book and saying to myself, "These aren't the real X-Men, these are people masquerading as the X-Men because they're not speaking with the voice I created for them." I think that is true of any writer, you don't read things that you wrote once it changes over to a new writer, simply because you need time to develop a callus of objectivity.

CHARLES: *It sounds a lot like a divorce.*

CHRIS: Very much so, yes.

CHARLES: *I suppose time heals all wounds; what does the future hold for Chris Claremont and the X-men? Will you be writing X-MEN, say, ten years from now?*

CHRIS: If Marvel makes me an offer I can't refuse and I have a mind to do it then, yes. Anything is possible — circumstances could change, I could change my mind, Marvel could change their mind, we could both change our minds.

CHARLES: *Any job after seventeen years has to be a bit monotonous at times. Is there a part of Chris Claremont that says, "Whew, I'm glad that's over with?"*

CHRIS: I'm sure, probably. Like I said, the dust hasn't even settled yet, so it's hard to say one way or another.

Now there's finally a way to cash in on all the arcane comics information you've accumulated over the years!

The winner of the "COMICS INTERVIEW 100 QUIZ" will be the one who answers all 100 questions correctly, or the person with the highest score. In the event of a tie, the earliest postmarked response will win.

The FIRST PRIZE is $100 cash, PLUS an opportunity to address the entire comics industry in a personal interview — to be published in COMICS INTERVIEW!

There will be two SECOND PRIZES of a free one-year subscription to COMICS INTERVIEW.

Three THIRD PRIZES of a one-year subscription to either COMICS REVUE or COMICS EXPRESS will be awarded.

The contributors of quiz questions are Comics Interview Group's distinguished panel of experts, composed of some of the most knowledgeable folks in the field.

The quiz is open to any and all individual entrants. Contributing editors are, of course, disqualified from answering their *own* questions — which automatically will be deducted from their total score. Groups or clubs are disqualified from joint efforts and any such entries by two or more persons, even if submitted under a single name, shall be automatically disqualified.

To be eligible entries, all answers must be printed legibly in the spaces provided on the official COMICS INTERVIEW 100 QUIZ form, or on a clear photocopy of the form, along with your full name, address and telephone number, and mailed to: 100 QUIZ, COMICS INTERVIEW, #1 Screamer Mountain, Clayton, GA 30525. Entries must be postmarked no later than November 15, 1991.

Answers will appear in COMICS INTERVIEW #105, along with — if we can manage it — an interview with the First Place Winner of the quiz, who can use the opportunity to address the entire comics industry . . .

COMICS INTERVIEW 100 QUIZ

Q1 What did the Catholic Legion of Decency object to about Robin's costume on television?

A1

Q2 What was the original title of the newspaper comic strip that was later titled POPEYE?

A2

Q3 What does the acronym T.H.U.N.D.E.R. stand for in T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS comics?

A3

Q4 In the 1970s, who was the first alternative (not underground) comic-book publisher?

A4

Q5 What now-deceased actor played Kato in the 1960s TV series, THE GREEN HORNET?

A5

Q6 What Marvel comics character is associated with writer Ken Kesey in Tom Wolfe's novel, THE ELECTRIC KOOL-AID ACID TEST?

A6

Q7 What Golden Age comic book writer went on to write the famed science-fiction novel, THE STARS, MY DESTINATION?

A7

Q8 What world-famous author did the French hire to write a screenplay for a LITTLE NEMO animated feature which was never produced?

A8

Q9 What did the letters DC in DC Comics originally stand for?

A9

Q10 What was the first name Walt Disney originally planned to use for Mickey Mouse?

A10

Q11 What physiological trait did Disney artists give Mickey Mouse for the first time in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" from FANTASIA?

A11

Q12 What was the name of the town that Rocky and Bullwinkle hailed from?

A12

Q13 What live-action TV series was Hanna-Barbera's THE FLINTSTONES based on?

A 13

Q14 What were the weaknesses of the Golden and Silver Age Green Lanterns' power rings?

A 14

Q15 What Marvel superhero did the British rock group The Kinks write a song about?

A 15

Q16 Which Hollywood matinee idol was an inspiration for Captain Marvel's facial appearance?

A 16

Q17 Which Sean Connery film was adapted into comics as an issue of DC's SHOWCASE?

A 17

Q18 Which high-flying hero came to America and assumed the identity of a dead Senator?

A 18

Q19 Which two superheroes were portrayed on film by serial star Tom Tyler?

A 19

Q20 Which two DC heroes have claimed Midway City as their home base?

A 20

Q21 Which character has Jack Kirby *never* penciled — Blue Beetle, Captain Marvel, The Atom or Kobra?

A 21

Q22 Jerry Siegel may be most famous for Superman, but which other 1940s star did he create?

A 22

Q23 Jonathan Frakes, Riker on STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, also played a Marvel super-hero at public appearances. Which one?

A 23

Q24 What does Charlie Brown's father do for a living?

A 24

Q25 What is the last name of Linus and Lucy?

A 25

Q26 Who is 176-167?

A 26

Q27 In HI AND LOIS, what is Lois's maiden name? (Hint: She has a famous brother.)

A 27

Q28 We have all heard the phrase "Starring that Oscar-winning rabbit, Bugs Bunny." Actually, there are two Oscar-winning rabbits. Name the other one.

A 28

Q29 Name five Earthmen who have at one time or another been Green Lantern.

A 29

Q30 What is the name of the Fantastic Four's mailman, and what is his "power"?

A 30

Q31 What was the first series in STRANGE ADVENTURES?

A 31

Q32 Who was DC's first funny animal superhero?

A 32

Q33 What does The Human Torch (1939 version) have in common with The Holy Roman Empire?

A 33

Q34 In Sugar and Spike, what was Spike's real first name?

A 34

Q35 In Little Lulu's stories of Witch Hazel and Little Itch, what did the poor little girl search for in the forest?

A 35

Q36 What is the name of Prince Valiant's horse?

A 36

Q37 What is the name of Tommy Tomorrow's space ship?

A37

Q38 What does Billy Batson's SHAZAM stand for?

A38

Q39 In MAD magazine, Captain Marbles had a magic word: SHAZOOM. What did those letters stand for?

A39

Q40 In ELFQUEST, What are the names of Pricknose's wife and mother-in-law?

A40

Q41 What is Howard the Duck's favorite brand of cigars?

A41

Q42 Warner Bros responded to Disney's Chip 'n' Dale with its own pair of rodents. Name those Looney-Tunes gophers.

A42

Q43 What were the first words of Popeye the Sailor?

A43

Q44 What do the following cities have in common: Boston, Kalamazoo, Pensacola, Louisville, Walla-Walla?

A44

Q45 What was Captain Marvel Junior's silliest limitation?

A45

Q46 We all know Gladstone Gander is the luckiest person in the world Who is the *un*luckiest?

A46

Q47 Where did the classic newspaper comic strip GASOLINE ALLEY get its name?

A47

Q48 What is the name of Gyro Gearloose's helper?

A48

Q49 What's the name of the ape in the TV cartoon GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE?

A49

Q50 What's the name of the dog in Neil Gaiman's 1990 novel, GOOD OMENS?

A50

Q51 Marvel's Thanos/Eros conflict is loosely based on which psychiatrist's discussions of his pleasure/pain principle?

A51

Q52 Desmond Pitt, Benjamin Grimm's flight buddy, was transformed by Dr. Doom into what monstrosity?

A52

Q53 Who is the heroic father of Scott and Alex Summers (Cyclops and Havok)?

A53

Q54 Jessica Drew was genetically manipulated into becoming Spider-Woman by whom?

A54

Q55 What deceased X-Man predated Rogue for the ability to imitate mutant powers?

A55

Q56 Kree-born Captain Mar-vell assumed what earthman's identity when first coming to Earth?

A56

Q57 Captain Mar-vell died from cancer after exposure to what deadly substance?

A57

Q58 What vegetative Golden Age character, shown briefly in Sun Fun Comics (Pelican Press), is considered the predecessor of the Flaming Carrot?

A58

Q59 Olympic swimmer Todd Arliss was transformed into Prince Namor's slippery nemises, named — ?

A59

Q60 He played a DC character in a serial and a hero from another company in another serial. Who was he, and what heroes? (Hint: the second character later moved to DC.)

A60

Q61 What three things do the 1940s Captain Marvel and The Phantom have in common?

A61

Q62 He drew the French version of Captain Marvel, Jr — but is far more famous for having drawn an indigenous French feature. Who is he, and what is that feature?

A62

Q63 In a late '50s story, Batman took on a different costume and name. This name was that of a JSA member, as well as three other DC characters, a Japanese movie hero, a SF movie, and a TV series. What is the name?

A63

Q64 Two famous characters from different companies — one defunct for over a decade, and the other, defunct, revived, and finally returned in a different guise — teamed up in a 1964 Brazilian comic. Name them

A64

Q65 He played a DC hero in a '40s movie; in '50s TV he briefly possessed the power of another DC hero. Who was he? Which DC characters were these?

A65

Q66 What two comics characters has Lyle Waggoner played?

A66

Q67 There are two actors named Rockwell who have played Kryptonians. Name them

A67

Q68 In certain Italian and Brazilian comics, there is a Green Hornet-like character who fights crime using a special car, various gimmicks, and a black costume. What is Superpato's secret identity?

A68

Q69 In the movie SUPERMAN III, what high school class was having a reunion?

A69

Q70 In ARCHIE, what is Jughead's real name?

A70

Q71 Which hero, who was published by two different companies, had a twin brother who came from yet another company?

A71

Q72 All three major members of this crime fighting family eventually proved to be twins. Name them

A72

Q73 Lou Wahl was an artist who worked for the American Comics Group. Who was he, really?

A73

Q74 What do Brick Bradford, the Shadow, and Spy-Smasher have in common?

A74

Q75 Besides the Lone Ranger, what other masked hero did actor Clayton Moore portray?

A75

Q76 A Chilean communist treatise made use — in its title and treatment — of what US comic-book character?

A76

Q77 What is the name of the owner of DC Comics who negotiated the rights to SUPERMAN away from Siegel and Shuster?

A77

Q78 When Dr. Strange became Dr. Stranger Yet, what did he look like?

A78

Q79 What is Wonder Warthog's secret identity and what newspaper does he work for?

A79

Q80 What kind of motorcycle does Wonder Warthog ride and what kind of motorcycle does he race against?

A80

Q81 Name Junior Tracy's first wife.

A81

Q82 What is the actual first name of "Buck" Rogers?

A82

Q83 Peter Parker was raised by his Aunt May and Uncle Ben — what were the given names of Peter's parents?

A83

Q84 What did the acronym S.H.I.E.L.D. stand for in the '60s and '70s, and what does it stand for today?

A84

Q85 Issue #100 of TALES TO ASTONISH featured an epic battle between what two Marvel characters?

A 85

Q86 Name the one word expression, made popular by Stan Lee, that means, literally, "fine wood shavings used in packaging."

A 86

Q87 What are the three issue numbers of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN not approved by the Comics Code Authority, because of their treatment of drug abuse?

A 87

Q88 Danny Ketch is the new Ghost Rider. Name the first person to assume the role of GHOST RIDER in a Marvel comic.

A 88

Q89 Who produced the original Cap'n Crunch commercials and gave us such greats as George of the Jungle, Dudley Do-Right, and Rocky and Bullwinkle?

A 89

Q90 What are the last names of the cartoon cat and mouse characters, Tom and Jerry?

A 90

Q91 Comic books evolved directly from comic strips. From what medium did comic strips directly evolve?

A 91

Q92 The first pamphlet-format comic book (FUNNIES ON PARADE in 1933) had what cover price?

A 92

Q93 When the Comics Code was created in 1955, EC Comics was one of the three publishers that did not sport the approval stamp on its comics. Name the other two.

A 93

Q94 Name the three hosts from the EC horror comics.

A 94

Q95 Richard Outcault created two colorful characters while pioneering the comic-strip medium. Name them.

A 95

Q96 Who invented the term "panelology" to describe the comic book and comic strip hobbies?

A 96

Q97 Literally millions of people have seen ARNOLD NOOPER comics on a rack over the last thirty years. Why can't you buy a copy?

A 97

Q98 Which of the following have appeared in comics: Muhammed Ali, Ty Cobb, Alice Cooper, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, George Gipp, Abraham Lincoln, The Not Ready For Prime Time Players, Edgar Allen Poe, Jackie Robinson, John Wayne?

A 98

Q99 Which of the following have been comic titles: NEW UNIVERSE, SUPERMAN 3000, JOURNEY INTO SUSPENSE, REAL MYSTERY COMICS, WONDER WOMAN'S BOYFRIEND STEVE TREVOR, SLAUGHTERMAN, COMBAT WOMBAT, GROOVY GHOULIES?

A 99

Q100 What are the four ink colors in the 4-color process used to print comic books?

A 100

The winner of the "COMICS INTERVIEW 100 QUIZ" will be the one who answers all 100 questions correctly, or the person with the highest score. In the event of a tie, the earliest postmarked response will win.

The quiz is open to any and all individual entrants. Contributing editors are, of course, disqualified from answering their *own* questions — which automatically will be deducted from their total score. Groups or clubs are disqualified from joint efforts and any such entries by two or more persons, even if submitted under a single name, shall be automatically disqualified.

To be eligible entries, all answers must be printed legibly in the spaces provided on the official COMICS INTERVIEW 100 QUIZ form, or on a clear photocopy of the form, along with your full name, address and telephone number, and mailed to: 100 QUIZ, COMICS INTERVIEW, #1 Screamer Mountain, Clayton, GA 30525. Entries must be postmarked no later than November 15, 1991.

QUIZ CONTRIBUTORS: Darrel Boatz, Mark Borax, Bob Greenberger, Dan Hagen, Don Markstein, Dave Nave, Rick Norwood, Charlie Novinskie, John G. Pierce, Chuck Rozanski, Mike Tiefenbacher.

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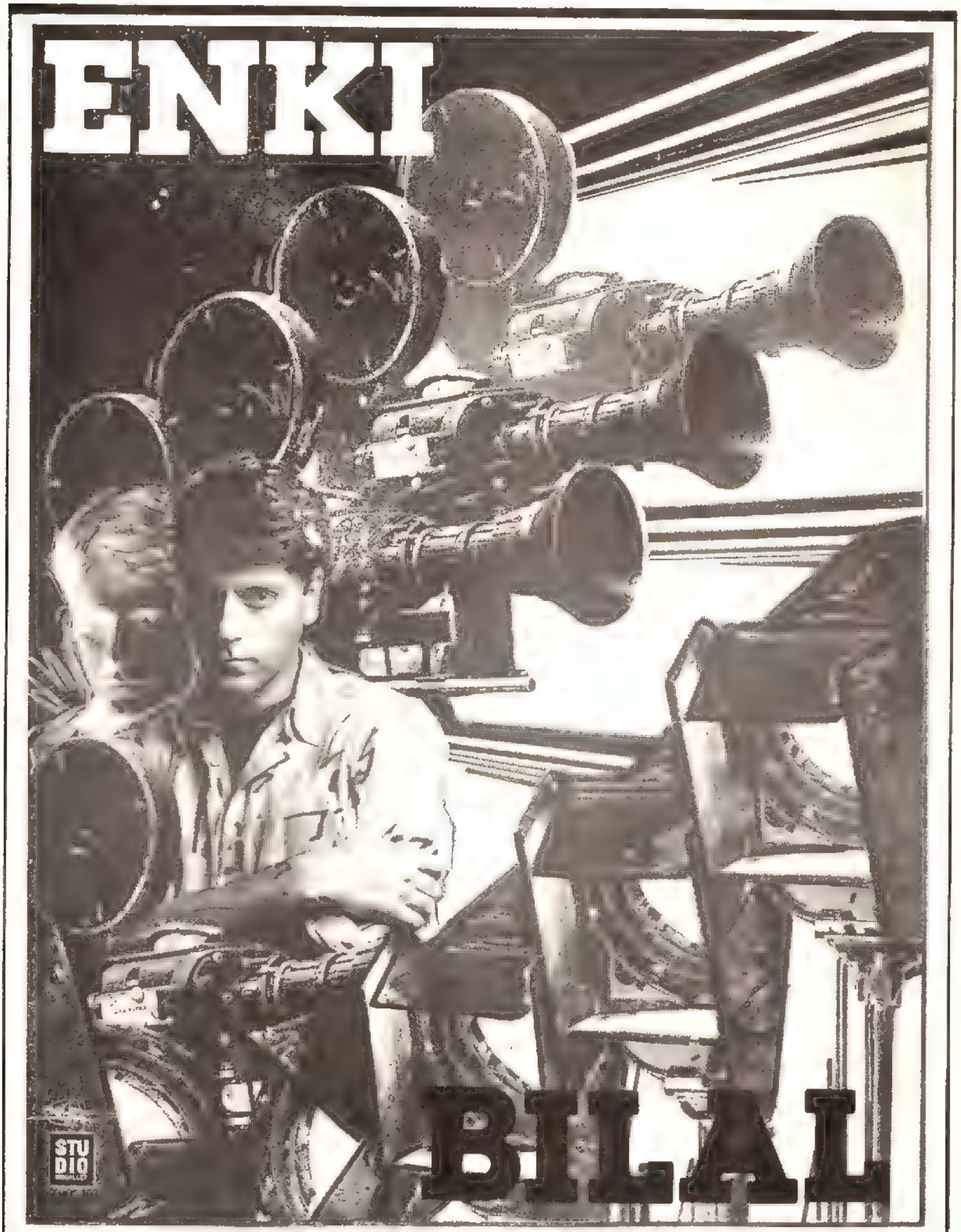
"I realize how much freedom in expressing myself I



Having spent his first decade of life in Beograd, Yugoslavia, during the period 1951-61 — a very tough time for the whole country after the War — Enki Bilal (christened Enes) with his younger sister and mother finally joined his father in the "city of lights" — Paris, France. Enki's papa was Marshal Tito's personal tailor, who designed and made the great leader's famous uniform, thus he succeeded in earning his family a better life outside Yugoslavia and developing his son's artistic talents in the field of visual storytelling.

could be getting in comics by exploring various themes."

At the beginning of the '70s, Enki Bilal burst forth in French comics with the strength of a promising youngster, and soon became the peer of Druillet, Moebius, Hermann, Tardi and the like. He brought into the world of comics a very special feeling for a gloomy, depressing atmosphere, pulling inspiration from memories of his childhood in the ruined Yugoslavian capital, and a new Eastern European sensibility primarily unknown to the Western world. In such a way, he made himself into a respectable figure among the intellectuals, fans and movie-makers and became one of the best-selling creators in the comics field. Working with writers such as Pierre Christin, J.P. Dionnet, or illustrating his own scripts, he has made his greatest contributions to SF and the field of so-called "political fiction."

Visiting his native town for the first time after 26 years, he made a sensation, thanks to the French Cultural Center in Beograd, its director Mr. Bruno Loyant, Mr. Francois Soharbonchi and a group of comics enthusiasts including Ye Scribe. The press, radio and TV went literally wild, and the fan response was enormous.

All of which is totally absurd.

You see, Bilal's comics are completely unknown *in his native country! His fame came in Yugoslavia only through rare and sporadic information, bulletins, news and interviews he gave to the French press or Yugoslavian world-travelling correspondent Zoran Petrović-Piroćanac. Maybe comics publishers in Yugoslavia were reluctant to import Bilal's graphic novels because they didn't know how the authorities would react to the not-so-bright-and-positive image of the Eastern European regimes this author envisioned in his works — such as THE HUNTING PARTY, for example.*

Hoping that this situation won't last forever, we present both parts of an interview conducted in Beograd — first part at the Student's Cultural Center, second part in the French Cultural Center and later the apartment of Ye Scribe and his wife. It was conducted by Bojan M. Djukić, transcribed and typed by Slavica Djukić, and not *copy-edited by Bilal, because he went back to Paris trusting his words and opinions to his friends.*

BOJAN M. DJUKIĆ: *Although cartooning is not your only preoccupation, how did you stick to it and find your own way of treating political stuff?*

ENKI BILAL: How did I get into comics? I started even in Beograd to draw and scribble; my parents encouraged me. Later, in France, I became obsessed with the passion of learning the new language! I had to master it for the sake of living there This language excited me with its beauty and somehow it was normal to wind up in comics. The French comics of that time became more and more the work of "l'auteur," and didn't bear the mark of a serial, hero or house style, but the creator and his personality. I realized how much freedom in expressing myself I could be getting in comics by exploring various themes, expressing my feelings and my attitudes.

BOJAN: *Did the Yugoslavian press and comics from the '50s have any influence on you?*

ENKI: Well, I was too little at the time I lived in Beograd. I was too small to absorb the Yugoslavian comics at the time, too young to remember. I started to thumb through the papers during 1956-57. I adored good ol' MICKEY MOUSE, but my world was and is so far away from him and his optimistic world. Knowing that we were going to emigrate to France, I was possessed with the "travelling fever." Not thinking at all of my future profession! The decision — that crucial moment for me — came later, in Paris.

BOJAN: *Did you ever imagine being such a celebrity, with great recognition, awards such as the Grand Prix of Angouleme, and the respect of your peers? How much work and self-sacrifice was put into fighting for a place in the sun among such competitors and mega-production in the French comics field?*

ENKI: Sure, I was happy because I won the prize in Angouleme . . . and the other rewards. But I need to stress the fact that there's such a struggle for that Angouleme prize! I'm lucky to have my audience of readers in France. It's not

All artwork accompanying this interview copyright ©1991 Enki Bilal

"No matter the image I've got, I'm telling stories that

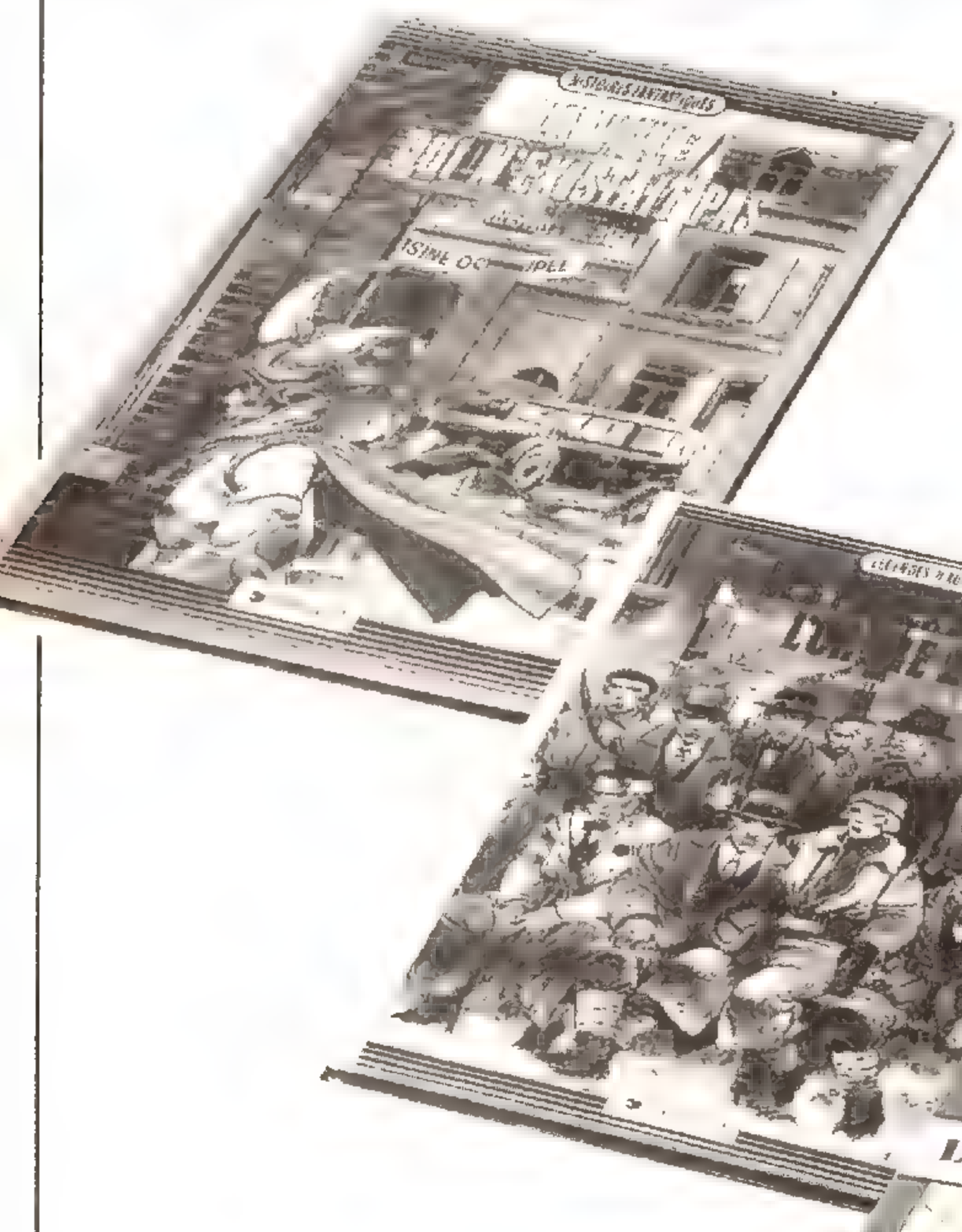
just the ideal of fortune and making the list of bestsellers, but having your *fans*! Good ones! I know that the intellectual level of my fans is very high. In Francophonic countries — and the same goes for Spain, Italy and Yugoslavia, etc. — comics are getting their "civil rights." The public accepts and recognizes the comics as an *art form*. We have as many creators and publishers in France as we have movies and film-authors. Think of our President Mitterand and the minister of culture, Mr. Jack Lang — great admirers of comics — that's the proof of civil rights for comics in French socialist culture.

BOJAN: *Do you consider yourself a fantasy author?*

ENKI: Wouldn't say so, no matter the image I've got. I'm telling stories which are a little bit fantastic. There are some weird persons, something happens in a near future — so, there are some elements of fantasy. I'm interested in starting from a real base — let's say, some political affair — which becomes fantasy through my draughtsmanship, passing into the domain of the unreal. But the fundamentals are in reality; that's the environment I'm comfortable in. There can be found my childhood memories, iconography I took from Beograd before the move to Paris. Now, those memories become apparent in my drawings — a very peculiar aesthetics. It's fascinating how I managed to design landscapes which do not remind people of anything seen!

BOJAN: *One of the best comics albums involving political themes after World War II is your PARTIE D'CHASE (THE HUNTING PARTY). How was it created, how long did you work on it, and how went your collaboration with the writer, Pierre Christin?*

ENKI: It's the sequel to a previous album, entitled RANKS OF THE BLACK ORDER (masterful treatment of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War). I'd been telling about terrorism in the West, so naturally I wanted to go on with a chapter about terrorism in the East, right? I know Eastern European



Here and next page: various covers to graphic novel hardcovers, all by Enki Bilal.

are a little bit fantastic. They are elements of fantasy."

countries very well, so I thought I could make up something; although I was born in Yugoslavia, which is geographically in the East, it's not part of the Eastern Bloc and under the influence of the Soviets. I wanted to create a counter-balance to RANKS, so great preparations were needed. My pal **Pierre Christin** who's a newsman and scripts for comics — and I had to travel a lot and prepare good files. We traveled a little together, but mostly separately. Because of "the Party" I fared alone in the USSR and every other Eastern country, to complete our files and paint that album — so hard, depressing and violent. It's the novel you can hardly comprehend and take. So, I filled it with the elements of fantasy. It was necessary for the sake of better understanding.

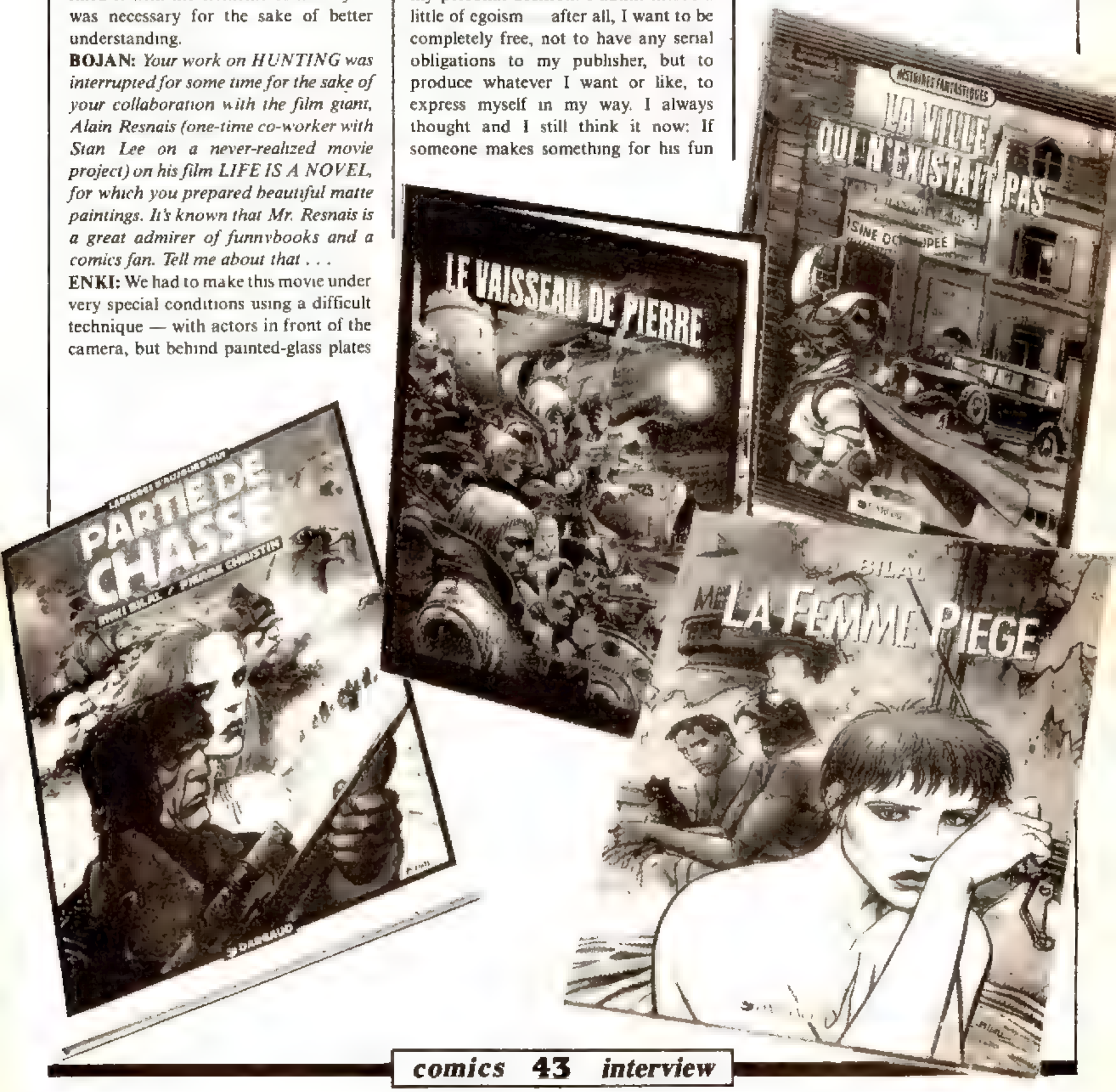
BOJAN: *Your work on HUNTING was interrupted for some time for the sake of your collaboration with the film giant, Alain Resnais (one-time co-worker with Stan Lee on a never-realized movie project) on his film LIFE IS A NOVEL, for which you prepared beautiful matte paintings. It's known that Mr. Resnais is a great admirer of funnybooks and a comics fan. Tell me about that . . .*

ENKI: We had to make this movie under very special conditions using a difficult technique — with actors in front of the camera, but behind painted-glass plates which simulate real environments. It was too complicated . . . very interesting as a try-out, but with not so good final results, if you ask me. We had little time for testing and mastering it. The film had . . . well, a modest success, but was an interesting experience for me because of the matte paintings. Here I don't count my earlier collaboration with **Mr. Resnais,** when I painted the poster for his movie MY UNCLE FROM AMERICA.

BOJAN: *Why have you chosen to eschew the serial approach to cartooning?*

ENKI: I choose to always make something new and not to tie myself down with the characters — purely a matter of my personal decision. I admit there's a little of egoism — after all, I want to be completely free, not to have any serial obligations to my publisher, but to produce whatever I want or like, to express myself in my way. I always thought and I still think it now: If someone makes something for his fun and pleasure, he's transfering the same feeling to his readers! So, for example, making LA FEMME PIEGE album (THE WOMAN TRAP, published in English in the pages of HEAVY METAL magazine and as a graphic album by Catalan Communications). I broke with the serial principle, which has alarmed the experts for comics, film, theatre and literature in France. LA FEMME represents declining from the usual narration, but its success showed that personal expression can be interesting to fans and the money-maker. *(Bilal's albums are sold by hundreds of thousands in France!)*

BOJAN: *In your earlier works you*



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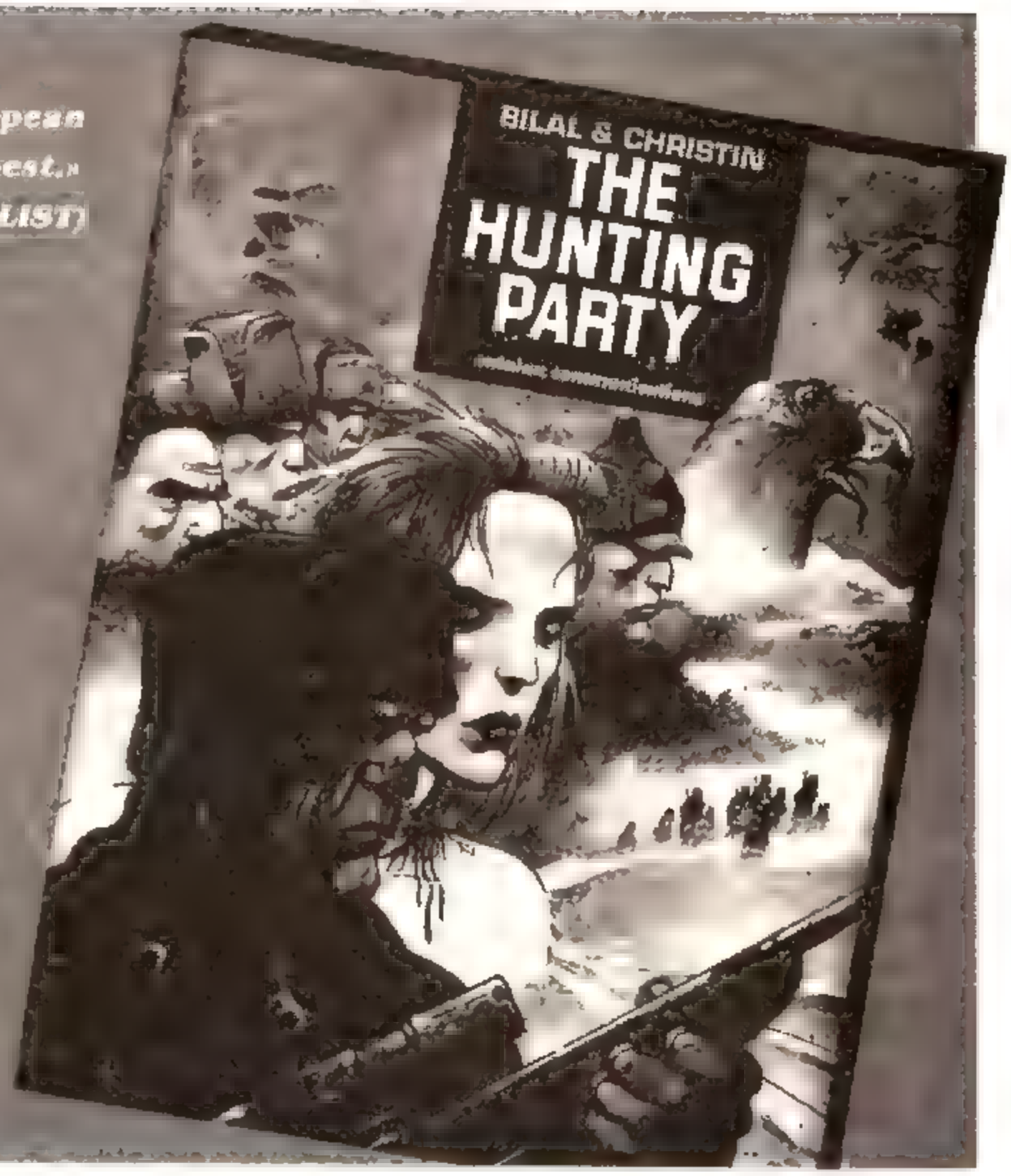

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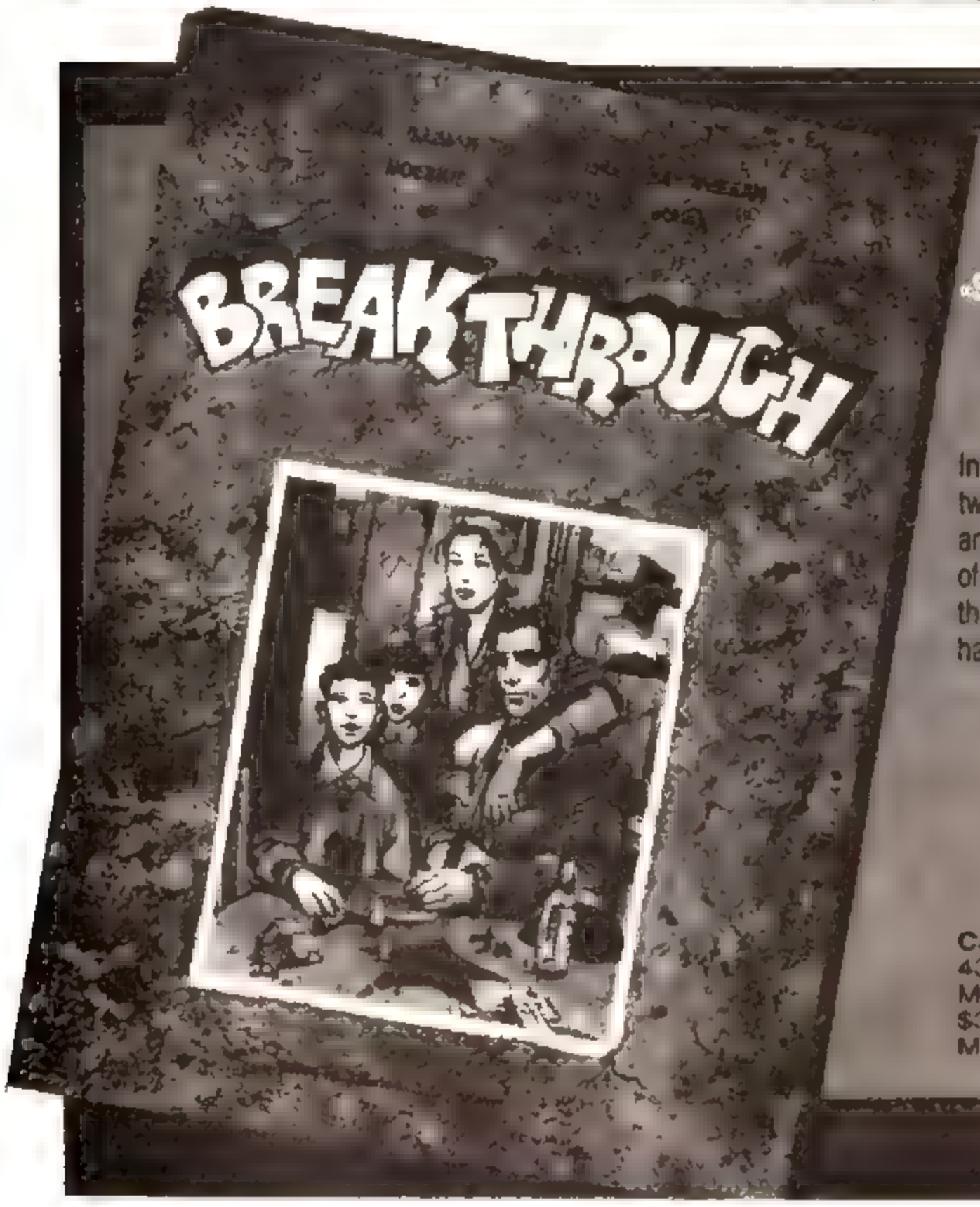

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"The fans expect a certain level of quality."

haven't mentioned your "old country" at all, but you've announced a project in which Beograd will play a distinguished part!

ENKI: Before all, I have to stress the fact that it's *not* a comics project, but a real *graphic novel*, similar to my LOS ANGELES book. **Christin** and I tell a story of several European cities and life in them — of New York, London, Cairo, Lisbon and my Beograd. Here, an artist will be the "big honcho" — meaning myself *(Laughter.)* I'm drawing illustrations for the book based on photographs I took in those cities, so upon those drawings we'll construct stories which resemble newspaper articles. French publishers eagerly accept such experiments, so I think it could be very interesting and lucrative for us.

BOJAN: *Although France exports enormous bulks of its comics, as in the case of cheese and wines, making it a big business – there are rumors of crisis in the comics industry*

ENKI: It's too complicated, so I'm not sure I'm able to explain it. It's general crisis, reflected in movies, literature, comics. For comics, there was a very bad period between 1975-1980; after that comics rocketed up again, so people got the idea that they could print *anything*. Everyone got into publishing comics, big money was in the game. They thought fans would eat up everything printed and put on the market, but — they were *very* wrong! Fans expected a certain level of quality they were used to. I think Glenat and Dargaud should be blamed for the glut of the market . . . Glenat maybe more than Dargaud! That's the crisis — too many comics, and the market unable to absorb them. Besides that, we had an over-use of some themes and genres — the publishers saw that fans dig SF, sex'n'sleaze, hyper-violence etc., so they poured tons and tons of comics on the market about those themes. We even got situations when editors demanded from artists and writers: "Gimme some sleaze-and-sorcery fantasy, that goes now for a trend." And, unfortunately, many creators played the game, working strictly under publishers' demands. So, it *had* to end like this. Yes, we have the crisis of comics in France.

BOJAN: *From the early '70s arose that tidal wave of the new French comics, influencing fashion, fine arts, theater, television, movies . . . especially in the USA. But the masters of comics are neglected, although they initiated that sensibility of they '80s . . .*

ENKI: All branches of art interact, enriching each other; I think it's good, one artform should support the other. I have talked to many film-makers in the USA. **Michael Mann,** for whom I did some design work, told me that in Hollywood studios they have collected comics and graphic novels by many artists — various American greats, **Moebius** stuff, my works, etc. — which serve as an inspiration or blueprint for design, "decor," for the whole image of a movie! Americans are ingenious; they *first* have discovered the chance comics have been giving to the movies and used it. I suppose that even we Europeans have to take that route. But, to be sincere, I'll say bluntly that comics artists — including me, for sure — are also being inspired by the movies, which are in a way very stimulating.

Take, for example, video-clips. They're kinda taped comics stories which move! People are flooded with images. The art of comic strips appears now as a little bit archaic, but I hope that younger generations are returning to the comics and that the future shall bring us many nice works. Yet comics shouldn't search for the references in themselves! They have to strive for broadness, to meet the demands of an audience and to endure the competition of other artforms.

Collaborator/writer Pierre Christin.

BOJAN: *Your costume design is, in my opinion, something most original in the world of funnybooks. How did you manage to tie the past and the future together in design?*

ENKI: Concerning that matter, it occurs to me that if you work out something spontaneously, you get the best results. I never had a methodic approach towards the costumes – I've always been lazy during drawing! I always considered digging through the files a great waste of time. I like my pencil to work instantly on the design and the narration, to build the drawing, and that's why I never bothered myself about garbs. That is how I came to the design, mixing the past, the present and the *possible* future. Probably there lies the strength of the universe I'm dealing with in my comics. My costumes are *out of time*. Once I was invited to sketch the gowns for a film, but when I completed my drawings and met with technicians and tailors, we realized that those duds can't be used! People couldn't put them on.

BOJAN: *The fashion design Moebius and you promoted influenced the fashions of the late '70s and early '80s . . .*

ENKI: I don't know, I'm not sure my works inspired any new fashion. My costumes seem old, worn-out — not as a blueprint for any kind of a fashion. But in France you could see a possible

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"I don't enrich my pencil sketch with details in any way."

influence on people's garments, coming possibly from my works — an Eastern European look, Russian style. In Paris, Cyrillic alphabet is "chic"! Didn't you know? *(I didn't.)* Three quarters of the people don't have the slightest idea what it is or means — but it looks to them interesting and very decorative! So, even comics have their own place in time — as the music and other art-forms.

BOJAN: *Let's talk about the writer-artist relationship. How is it realized, what is the basis of it?*

ENKI: Concerning my collaboration with **Christin,** he was always shooting first, giving me the story outline of a theme we'd discussed earlier. His instructions give me freedom — enabling me to visualize in flexible conditions. My part is to direct the comic story, to make it live. I have to say that, after many years of working together, Pierre and I understand each other better and better. There are no exact demands in a script. Concerning THE HUNTING PARTY — a tale of the USSR and its satellites — we put down in advance everything about the matter. I had my own motifs and reasons, Pierre had his own. He insisted that everything should be with roots in documents and historical files, but I realized that it wouldn't be pallatable with no taste of fantasy. The final result — graphic album — has made it in the market easily, thanks to our mutual understanding and friendship. That's my vision of team-work.

BOJAN: *Can you see the difference between the treatment of comics in the USA and in Europe? In France, comic strips are considered as a high art, no matter what the commercial success . . .*

ENKI: In the USA, comics are produced as strips for papers and as serials for the comic books and are mostly thrown into the trash after consuming; on the other side, France is elitizing itself in the context of comics. It's a paradox, but I'm already considered an "old artist"! I hope they'll open the doors of the publishing houses again to the young people and give them a chance to show their talents and begin pro work.

(This second part of our conversation took place the next day.)

BOJAN: *Tell me something about your pencilling. Do you put down all the details, or do you first work out just the breakdowns?*

ENKI: My pencil drawings are very rarely detailed. I just lay out some outlines and "mise-en-scene." The most important part is inking and coloring. I use Blanzy pens and Isabey brushes, occasionally Varderhaar. I apply watercolors, gouache, acrylics and color pencils.

Cover from THE HUNTING PARTY.

BOJAN: *In books about you, your life and work, I've seen very elaborate and detailed pencil studies. Do you make any difference between the illustration work and strips?*

ENKI: Well, no . . . I don't enrich my pencil sketch with details in any way. It comes later. There's no important difference between those two approaches.

BOJAN: *And is your coloring inspired with the gamma of the movie picture and the lighting?*

ENKI: I'm influenced by the photography, but only on the level of the first inspiration. Later, I'm choosing color intensity and lighting quite spontaneously.

BOJAN: *Have you ever received an offer to do storyboards for a movie project?*

ENKI: Yes, but I've refused, because it interests me not at all. I'd feel frustrated if I should work for someone else. Work in animation doesn't interest me, either. I couldn't simplify my drawings for the sake of the film's needs.

BOJAN: *Your turn in building the narration is a rare case in French comics?*

ENKI: No, **Christin** made it earlier with **Tardi;** I wasn't the first one. New fans are different from earlier generations. They're ready for new contents, such as THE HUNTING PARTY. They're grown-ups.

BOJAN: *Besides leaving the serial approach, what do you think about bringing tragic tones into the stories?*

ENKI: Every tale has its own life. In the novel, in the movies — even in comics. Are you asking me about superhero muscle-sagas? I don't mind the stuff!

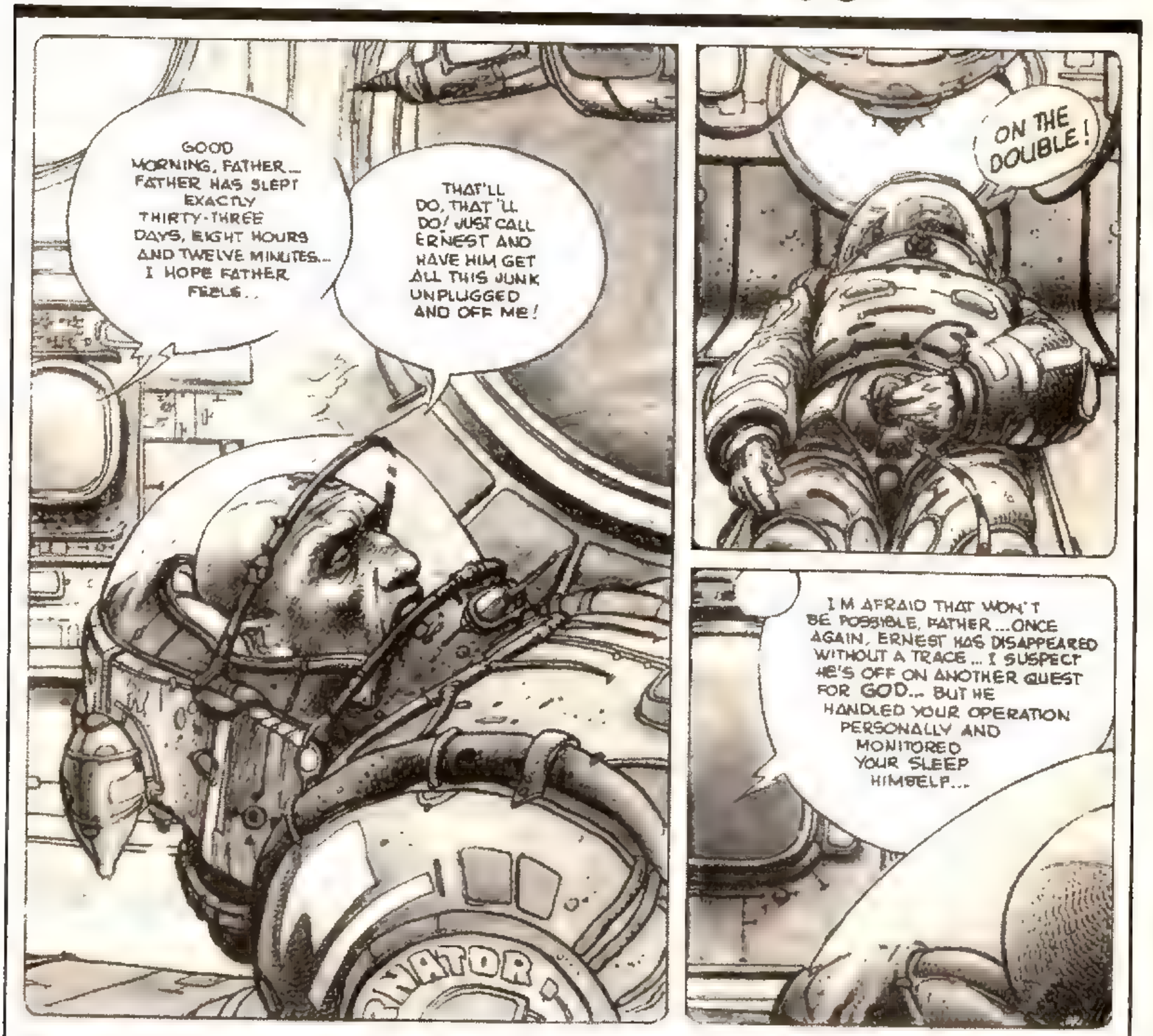
BOJAN: *I think that your hero is not a person, but the time itself, or a period — mostly, a non-existing one. Is it Christin's influence?*

ENKI: It's hard to explain . . . the time

"I'm not like some of my colleagues who always carry

Cover from Dargaud's PILOTE magazine.

sketchbooks and pencils and draw at any given moment."


GOOD MORNING, FATHER... FATHER HAS SLEPT EXACTLY THIRTY-THREE DAYS, EIGHT HOURS AND TWELVE MINUTES... I HOPE FATHER FEELS...
THAT'LL DO, THAT 'LL DO! JUST CALL ERNEST AND HAVE HIM GET ALL THIS JUNK UNPLUGGED AND OFF ME!
ON THE DOUBLE!
I M AFRAID THAT WON' T BE POSSIBLE, FATHER ...ONCE AGAIN, ERNEST HAS DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE ... I SUSPECT HE'S OFF ON ANOTHER QUEST FOR GOD... BUT HE HANDLED YOUR OPERATION PERSONALLY AND MONITORED YOUR SLEEP HIMSELF...

Panels from Enki's "In the Name of the Father, and of the Gun . . .", a short story collected in a book called OUTER STATES. This is but one example of Bilal's higher fantasy material.

exists in my albums, but persons are the barometers of a time. Your question is too wide, we'd lose too much time, wasting it in my explanations.

BOJAN: *Okay, then . . . THE FAIR OF THE IMMORTALS you scripted for yourself. How do you manage to control your characters? They seem to have their own life . . .*

ENKI: Very interesting question . . . it concerns my way of work! I mean, when I write the script, I have some characters and situations at the beginning. Later — with no strict plans — I let the story develop on and on by itself. My people have the chance of independent life; the storyline can be changed, depending on characters' behavior.

BOJAN: *Many writers, when they involve politics into their works, say that they put in only political elements. Are your comics "political"?*

ENKI: No, I don't demonstrate in a political context and I don't describe the militarism. I only use politics as a support. Nothing else.

BOJAN: *Do you put your characters against political context or political evil?*

ENKI: I describe that problem in my strips — persons under political pressure and politics itself.

BOJAN: *What prevails in stories you produce with Christin — history, fiction, or remembering?*

ENKI: I make no difference among the three of them. The most important for me is to tell stories. We make the stories together and let them develop by themselves. That's most important for Pierre and me.

BOJAN: *How does he react to the fantasy elements you bring in?*

ENKI: Not very enthusiastically, but we've agreed.

BOJAN: *Do you change the script during the work?*

ENKI: Yeah, it happens . . .

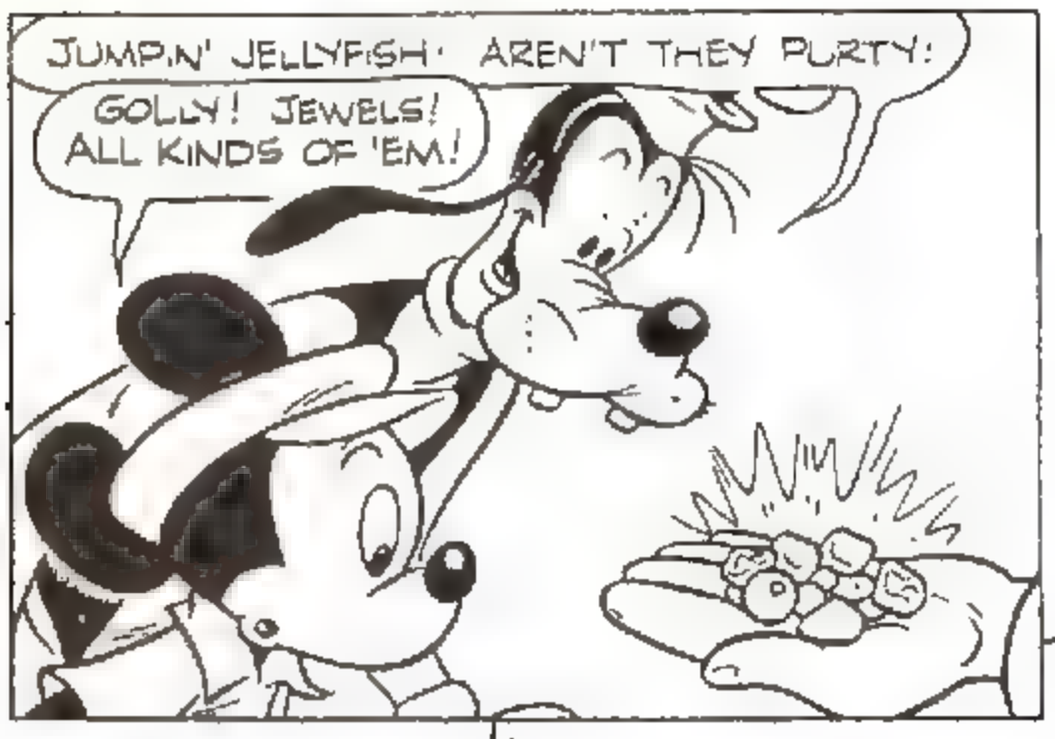
BOJAN: *That aspect of fantasy gives things a universal look . . .*

ENKI: I agree, but it has bothered **Christin!**

BOJAN: *Some time ago I read in one of your interviews that you've not a "spontaneous artist." What does that mean?*

ENKI: It means that I don't work if I have no idea. I'm drawing fast, but I'm not like some of my colleagues who always carry a sketchbook and sharpened pencils and draw at any given moment.

What do collectors look for in Disney Comics?



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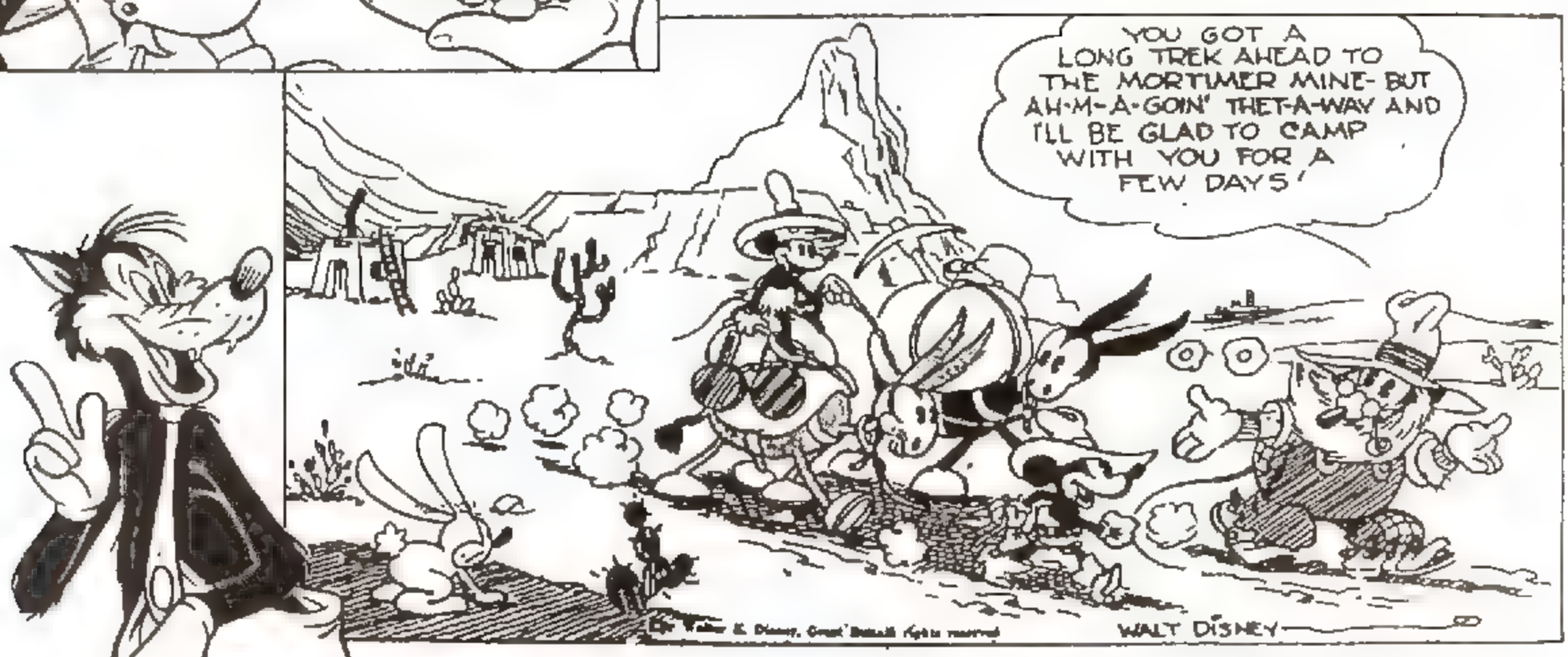
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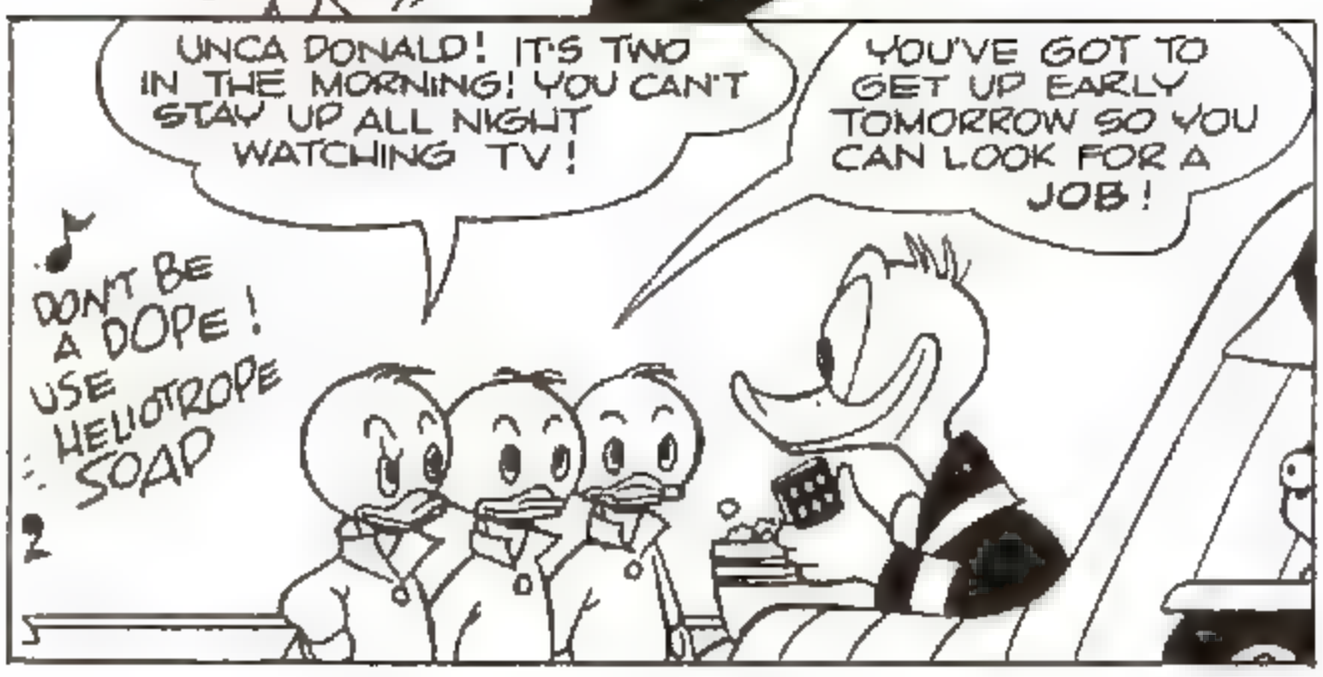
CLASSIC STORIES


UNCA DONALD! IT'S TWO IN THE MORNING! YOU CAN'T STAY UP ALL NIGHT WATCHING TV!
YOU'VE GOT TO GET UP EARLY TOMORROW SO YOU CAN LOOK FOR A JOB!
DON'T BE A DOPE! USE HELIOTROPE SOAP
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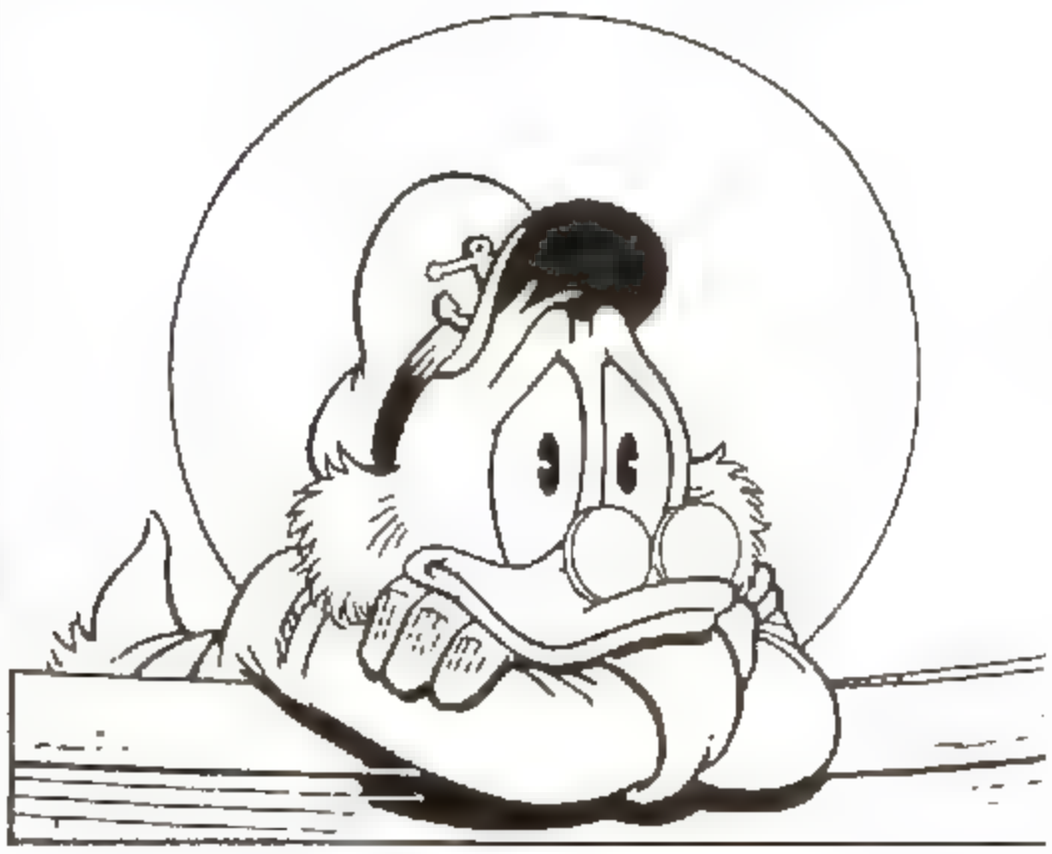

CLASSIC ARTISTS

The classics of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, every month from Disney Comics

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DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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Mills, Pat (British Writer), #36, 13 pp., 2000 AD, Dr. Who, Judge Dredd, Dan Dare
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Motter, Dean (Writer), #77, 17 pp., The Prisoner, Mr. X
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Nicieza, Fabian (Writer/Editor), #96, 6 pp., Spotlight on Marvel's X-Force, mutants
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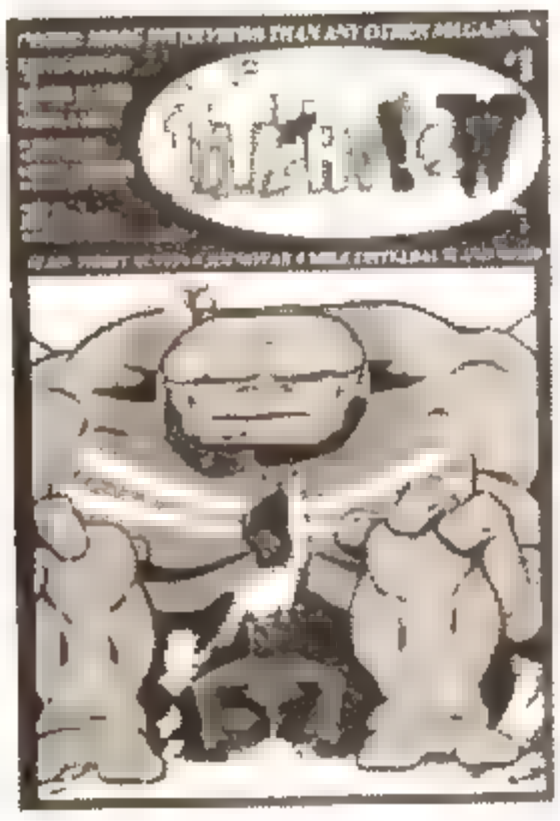

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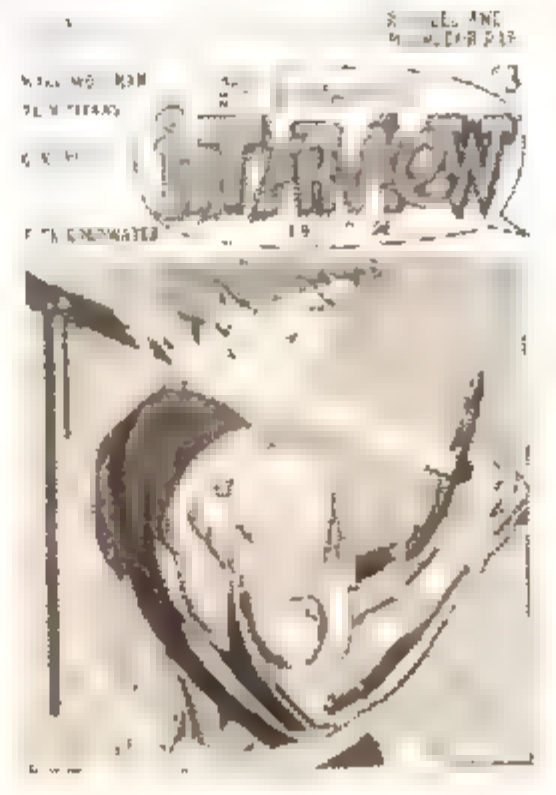

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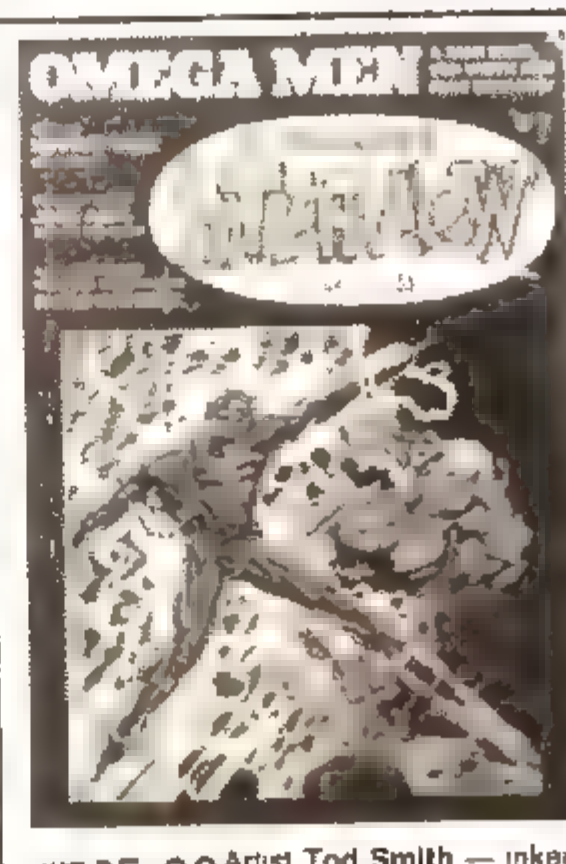

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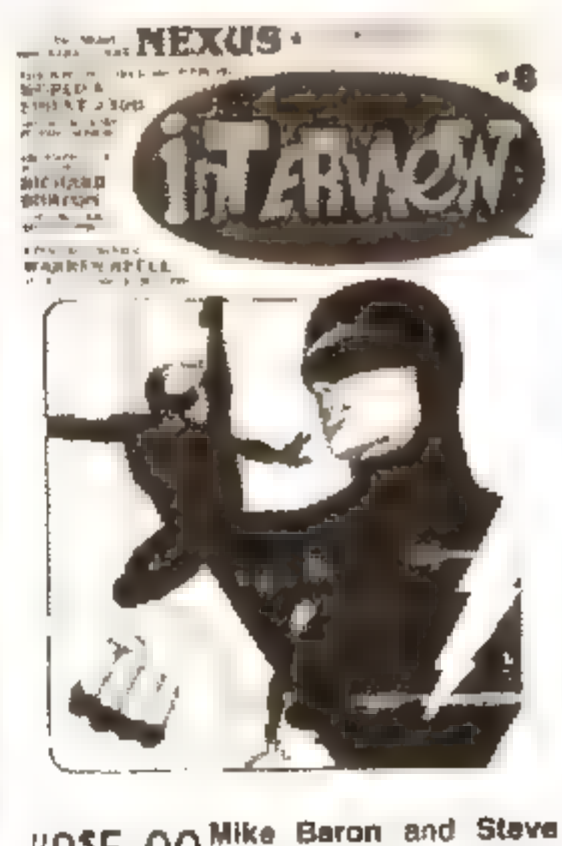

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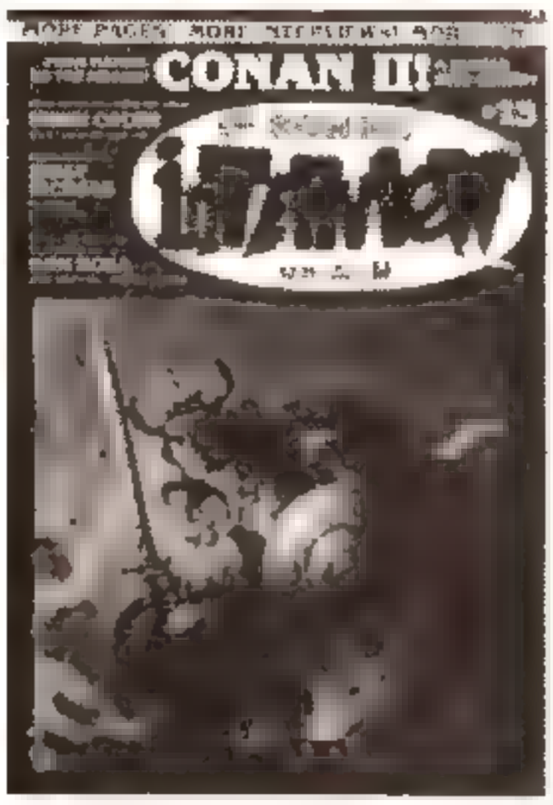

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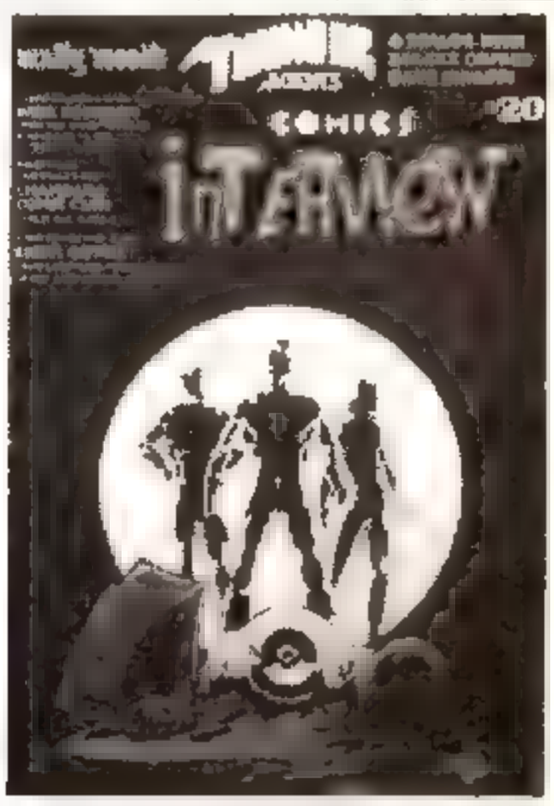

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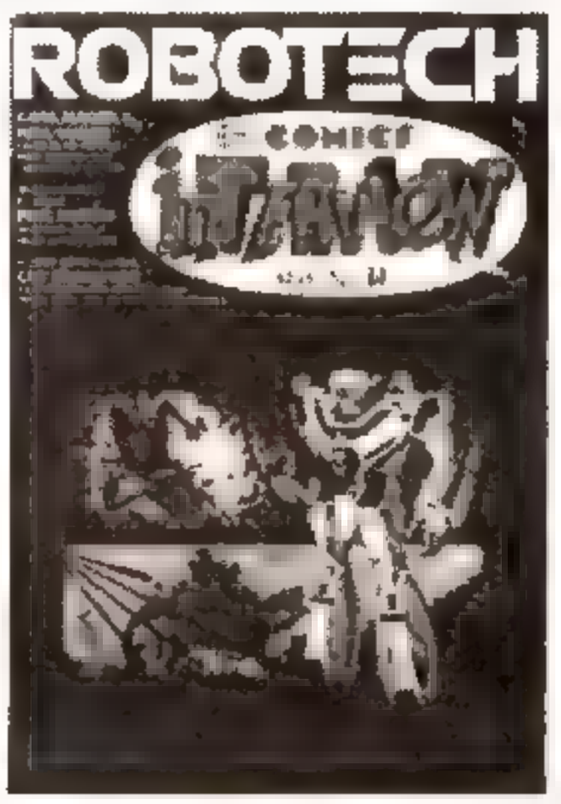

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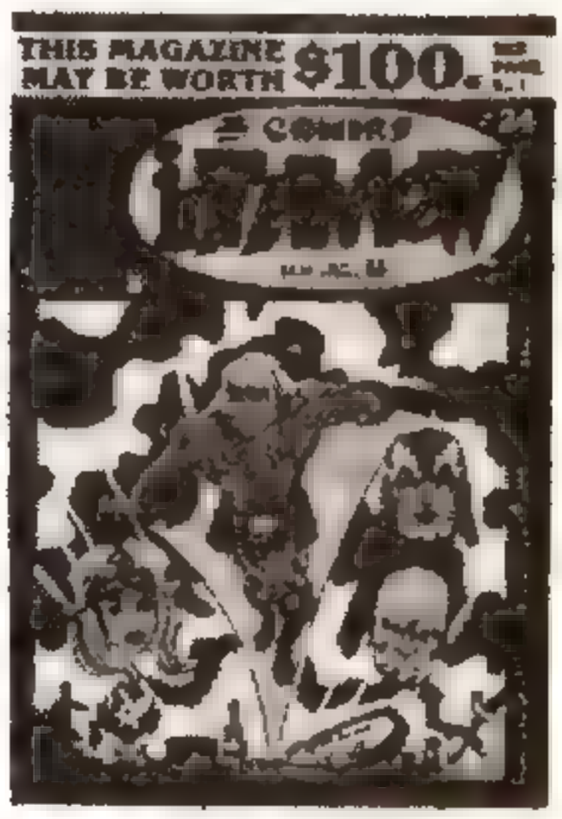

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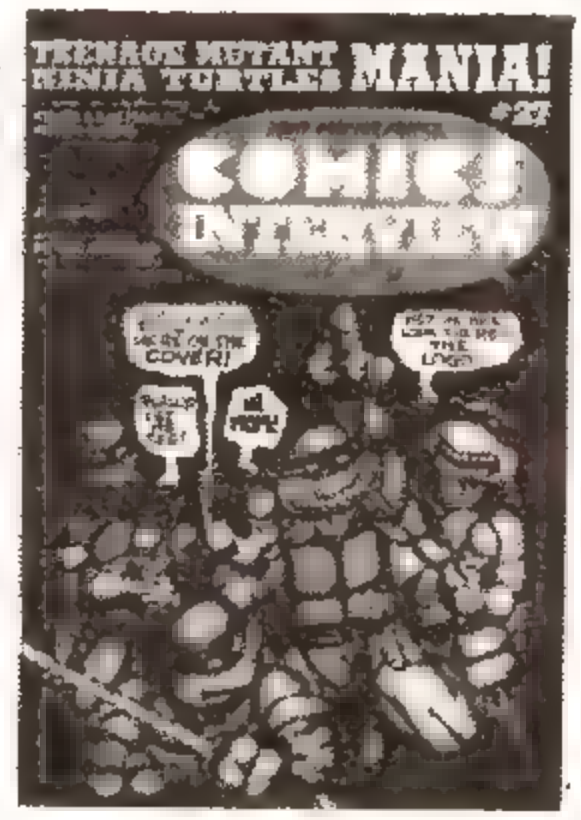

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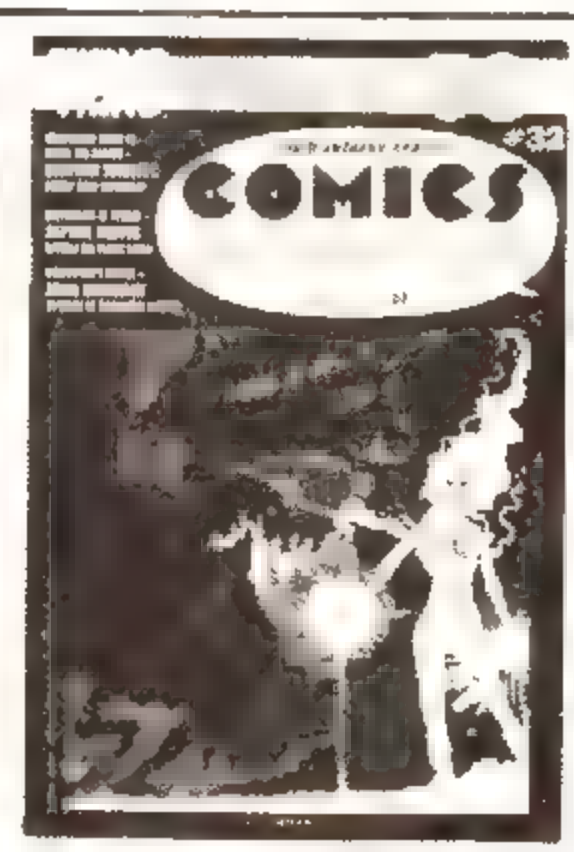

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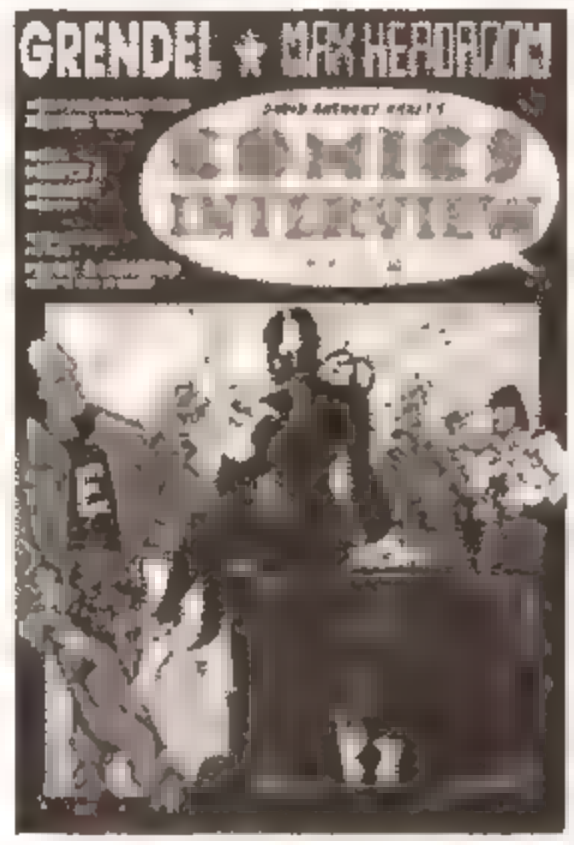

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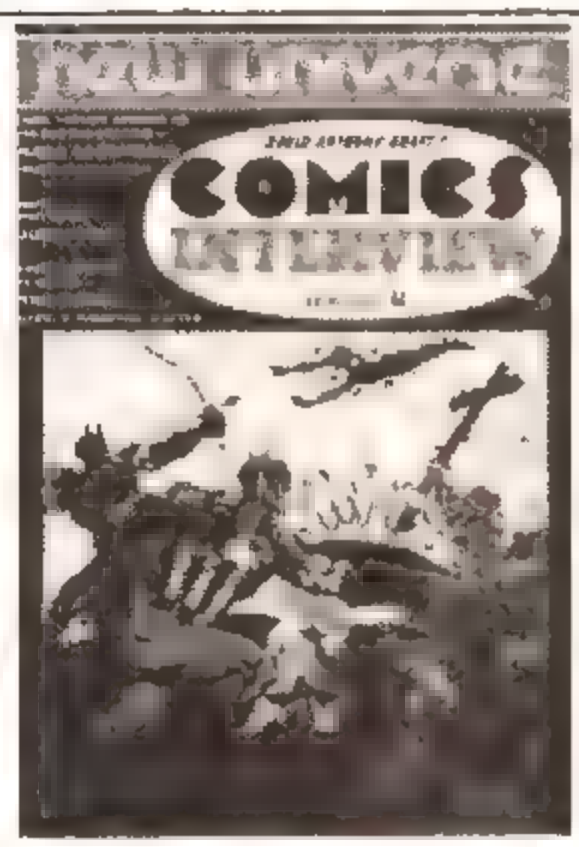

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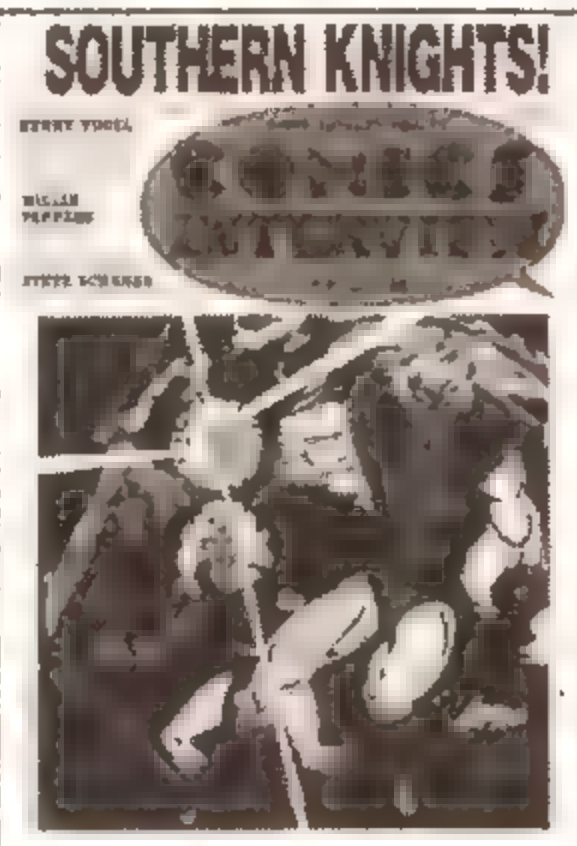

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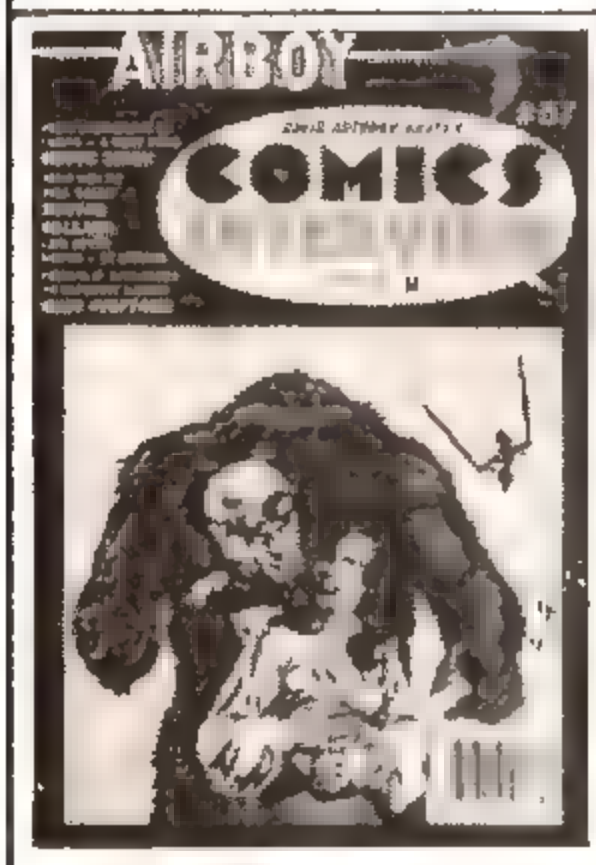

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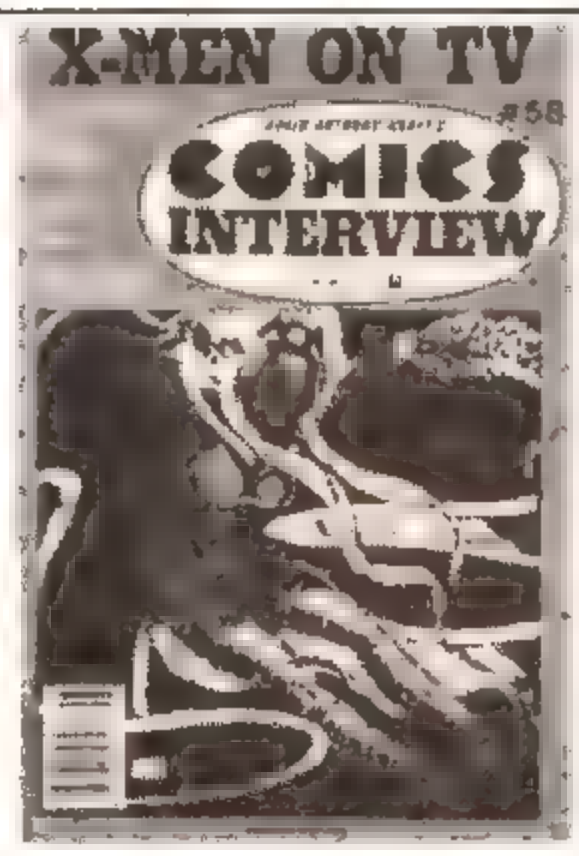

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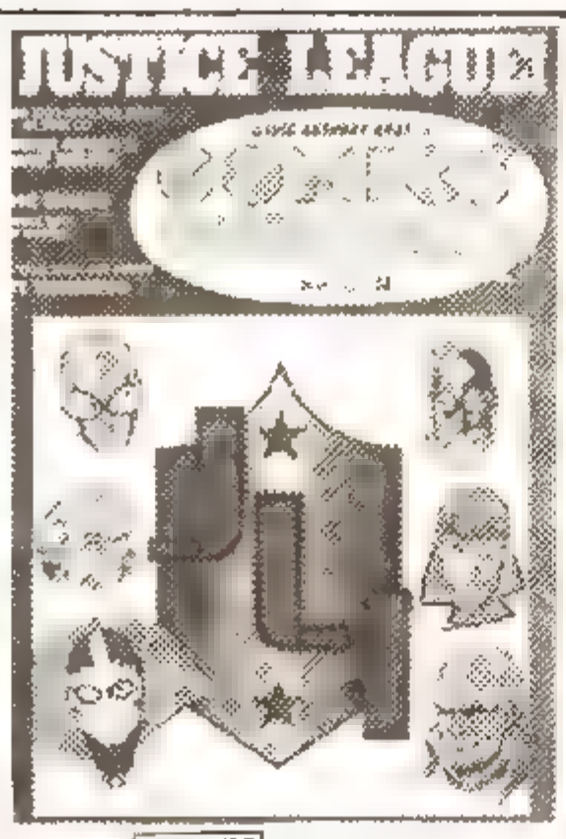

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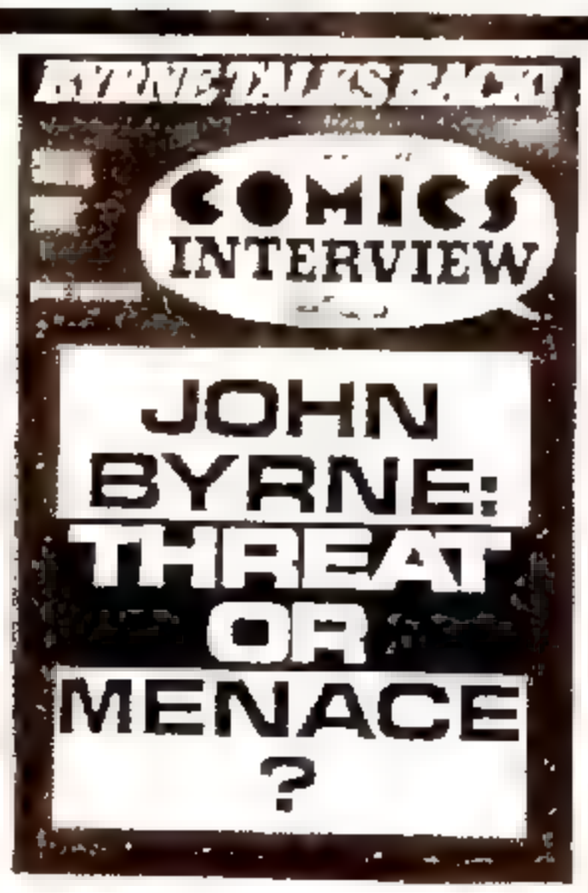

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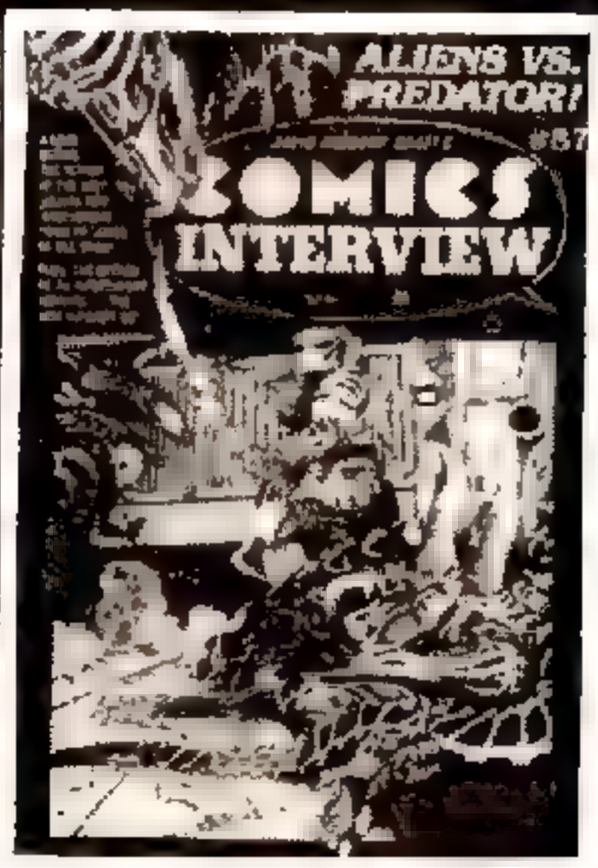

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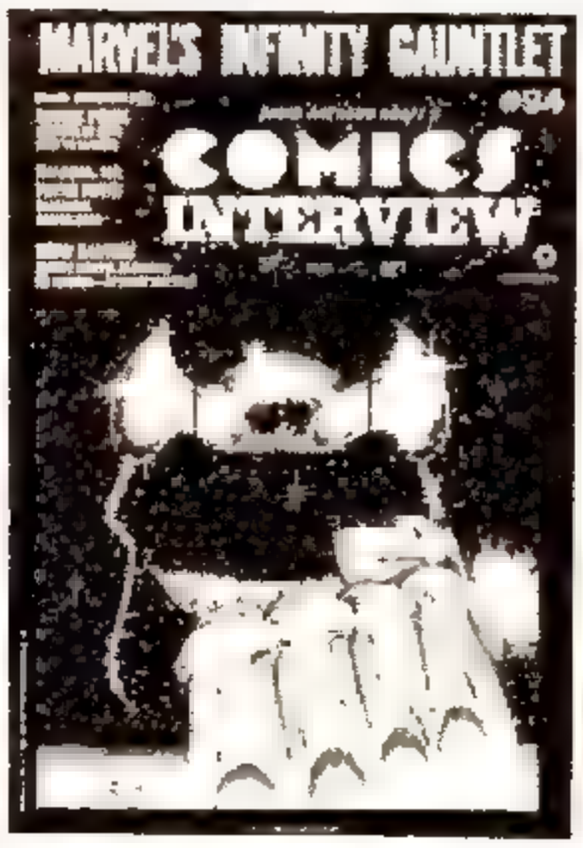

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"I think Kitchen's production is beautiful, as usual."

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In the field of comic-book art, Will Eisner is an acknowledged genius. Born in Brooklyn in 1917, Eisner took elements from film, stage, radio, literature, and the corner pool hall in creating THE SPIRIT, a '40s comic-book insert in the Sunday editions of many national newspapers, which Eisner owns and which is still being reprinted worldwide to this day.

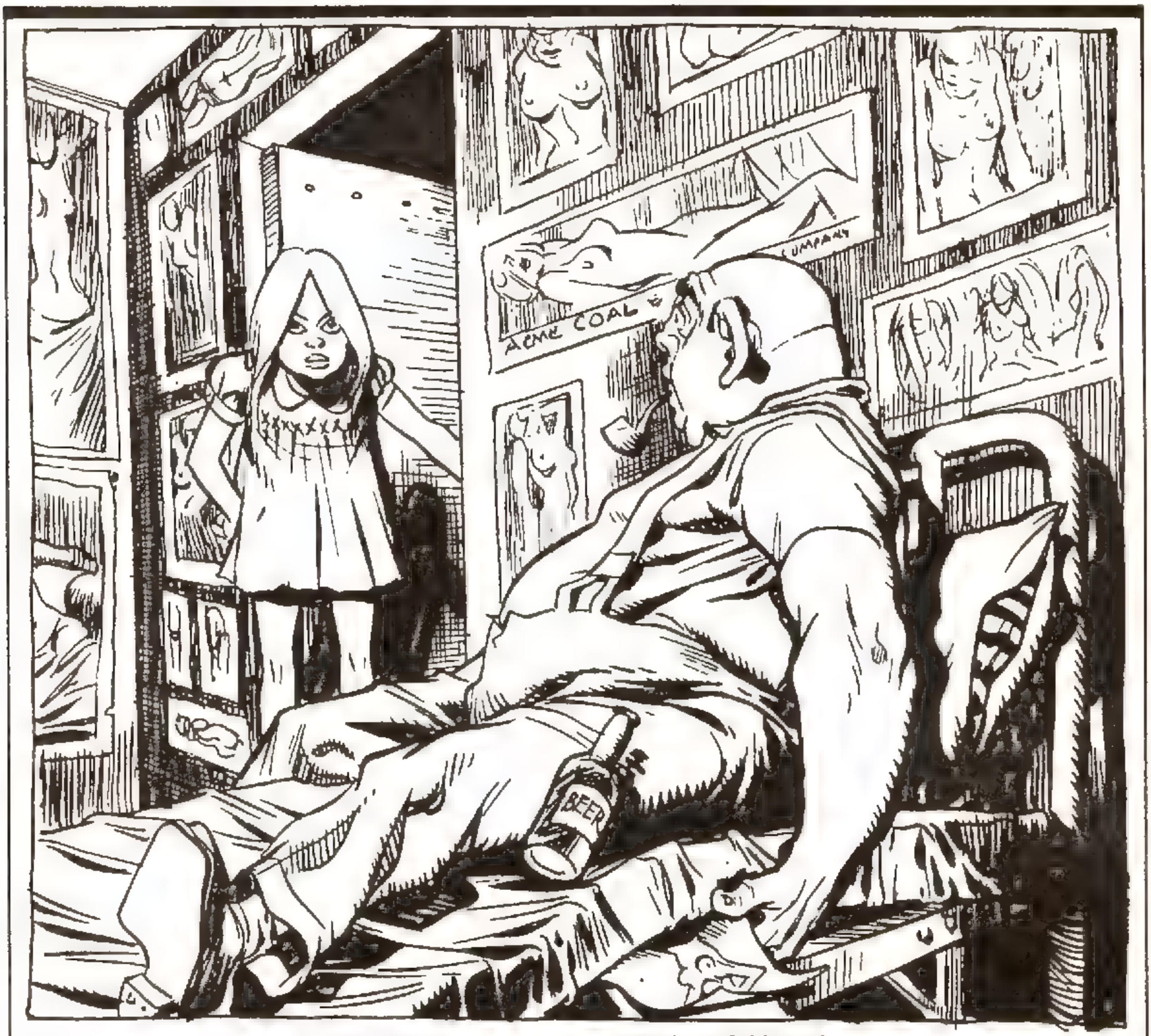
But Eisner was professionally creating comics while still a teenager, and by the age of 21, he ran a comic-book production studio which packaged entire concepts for the then-burgeoning comic-book industry. Among his first clients were the Fiction House line and the incomparable Victor Fox's group of titles. He also drew covers for such books as JUMBO COMICS; SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE; PLANET; and WONDERWORLD. For the Quality group, he drew "Espionage" in SMASH COMICS, and created the tiny superhero Dollman, illustrated by Lou Fine, for FEATURE.

Eisner also wrote and drew the initial adventures of the super-patriot Uncle Sam for NATIONAL and invented Blackhawk and his gang for MILITARY. He has been involved in WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY and produced such graphic novels as LIFE FORCE, A CONTRACT WITH GOD and TO THE HEART OF THE STORM. No one has ever equalled him in incorporating his logo into the splash panel, and few have approached him in capturing the look, feel, shadows, and smells of urban life. Says cartoonist Jules Feiffer, who has aided Eisner with THE SPIRIT, "He remains ambitious and competitive, a cartoonist not out of the past but an artist who encompasses past, present, and, very probably, future."

LOU MOUGIN: *We're at the Dallas Fantasy Fair and I'm speaking with Will Eisner. He's done a few things, such as THE SPIRIT. So, since everybody knows about the things he's done, we'll just start talking with him about recent things, such as THE BUILDING. What do you think of it?*

WILL EISNER: I enjoyed doing it. I think **Denis Kitchen's** production is beautiful, as usual. Denis always does a good publishing job on whatever I do. This book was very important to me because I wanted to deliver myself of a thought that I'd been carrying for years. As a city boy, I was always disturbed by the tearing down of buildings. I always wondered what happened after the building disappeared. I felt a little

"All lighting, perspective of my artwork are environmental



Here and next two pages, examples of Eisner's non-Spirit creations.

violated by it. Most people do, I suppose.

LOU: *As if the soul of the building was still there . . .*

WILL: Yes, I wondered what the heck happened to it. I guess I'm a little bit of a mystic. I am bemused by the things that remain, and that's the reason I wrote the book

LOU: *That's kind of the echo of the Dropsie Avenue tenement that you wrote about in A CONTRACT WITH GOD — your affair with the building and the inhabitants of it.*

WILL: Well, if you live in a city, like New York City, you soon realize that your life is encompassed within those buildings And, after awhile, the walls and the corridors and stairways become very much a part of your life. Like someone living on a farm begins to develop a relationship with natural phenomena around them.

LOU: *That reminds me, as a non sequitur, of a piece Duke Ellington wrote, called "Harlem Air Shaft." He wrote this piece of music based on the sounds and melodies of life going on around him that would come to him through the air shaft of the tenement he was living in at Harlem.*

WILL: Absolutely, absolutely. All my artwork, all the lighting and all the perspective of my artwork, are environmental influences, just as the air shaft influenced **Duke Ellington.** City lighting is different from country lighting

LOU: *The thing that does come across in most of your recent works — THE DREAMER, THE BUILDING, A CONTRACT WITH GOD, TO THE HEART OF THE STORM — are the strong memories you've got of your life in the '20s, the '30s — may be even before then. Are those your strongest memories, the ones that motivate you the most completely?*

WILL: Well, I guess you might say, broadly, we *are* our memories. It's what we remember that makes us do the things we do and gives us the basis for how we react to things.

LOU: *And those are your most powerful memories, revolving around your*

WILL: My youth? Well, when I trip into them and try to retrieve them they are the most powerful memories. Most of my work, in recent years, has been centered on what I like to call the selection of memory. And the reason for that is, I like to regard myself as an honest writer. I like to write about what I know. And what I know about is what I've experienced. I find it very hard to write about mutants in space. Well, there are very good men writing about that, and they are skilled and have a brilliant talent in that area,

influences, just as the airshaft influenced Duke Ellington."

but I don't feel comfortable writing in that particular genre because I don't know it.

LOU: *But of course, we write about what we know, and one of the things that comes through in A LIFE FORCE, in THE BUILDING is what I guess I might say was the atmosphere of fear around that time, the Depression, the fear of Hitler overseas - people emigrating over here to save their very lives — and organized crime, which was just getting highly organized at that time in places like New York and Chicago.*

WILL: Well, city life is kind of a jungle. You're under a sort of pressure all the time living in a big city, whether it's Paris or London or wherever. There's a dynamism there. There's a constant turbulence. Again, comparing it to living in a farm in Omaha, where there is a much more peaceful existence. Things move much more slowly there. No corners around which things are waiting for you, there aren't streets where traffic is moving at an enormous rate of speed, you aren't pushed by the relentless rhythm of life around you. The jungle senses which make you aware of danger, which keep you prepared for the unexpected.

LOU: *I dare say, if you'd been a youth in the late '40s, the early '50s or so, you might have been doing something like AMBOY DUKES, the street gangs and all of that. Or if you were doing a contemporary thing, you might do something about one of the drug gangs who will, say, shoot somebody just for coming across their turf.*

WILL: Well, let me amend that just a bit about the human condition. There are more facets of life than just street gangs

LOU: *Right, excuse me on that one.*

WILL: I didn't want to be misunderstood. Because in a book I did a few years ago, I intended to do a portrait of the city based on the things of my own experience. But I realized that to dwell too long on the transitory moments, the events that occur, would limit the scope and the value of the book. There have been gangs in New York since time immemorial. In the late 1800s New York City was a jungle of gangs — the Five Points Gang and many others. We haven't had graffiti in New York forever, but graffiti is gradually disappearing now. Had I done a book on graffiti, it would have been transitory and become passe in a few years.

LOU: *One of the things I seem to have gotten here from your stories — in particular the first one in THE BUILDING — is that your characters have toughened up in the city, have developed the jungle senses, have desensitized themselves in order to survive. Then they have an experience that causes them to have to resensitize themselves to life, to human suffering.*

WILL: That's very perceptive of you. What I'm about, in dealing with the human condition, is that, despite the environment, the human being is still human in the soul. He adjusts to the environment, but still inside him is a sense of caring. Which, to me, is one of the most mysterious things about a human being. The ability to care about another human being. I don't know what the deep psychological reasons are, but it's a phenomenon that needs to be recognized, no matter how difficult life is. Just as among the gangs there is a morality of sorts, so it is in the city among the city-dwellers, in that he is a creature of his environment

LOU: *Your books are set in the past. There are some books which are nothing but period pieces, which explore the past nostalgically, set up some characters and have them interact with famous historical figures. But the best works of this kind are in fact like a book written in the past — say, by O'Neill — dealing with a situation which existed in the '20s or '30s or whatever. If they do it well enough, as I think you have in THE BUILDING, A*

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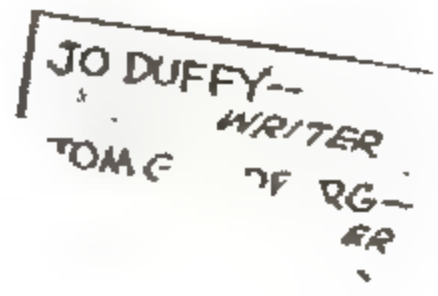

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"I think of myself as a writer of formal history."

LIFE FORCE, A CONTRACT WITH GOD, if you deal with the universal situation of characters, of people, it becomes a thing which is not tied to the '20s, '30s, et cetera. It will hold true if you're reading it in the '80s or '90s, which is certainly the feeling I got with CONTRACT, LIFE FORCE, and the rest.

WILL: Well, good. I do not think of myself as a writer of formal history, or even as doing a gothic novel. It happens that my characters are set in a given period of time. But I'm dealing with something more enduring — human interaction, human experience.

"The original writer of M*A*S*H didn't see

ALEX

One cold winter while I was on the East Coast — having just come down from Toronto working on a film project — I thought that it would be nice to hook up with some of the comic-strip artists whom I admired from my youth in Australia. Some of these guys worked in the '40s in what's referred to as the Golden Age of Comics. Well, one of these artists worked for Will Eisner on THE SPIRIT and went on to draw the soap-opera comic strip, APARTMENT 3-G. He is none other than Alex Kotzky.

I always found Alex's art inspired. Working on a realistic comic strip, doing both dailies and Sundays for 365 days — year in and year out, for 30 years — would drive many of today's super-hero cartoonists nuts. Hell, some of these guys burn out after only 20 issues on any given book. Can you imagine 30 years of trying to make your work exciting?

PAUL POWER: *Alex, when did you first start in comics, and why?*

ALEX KOTZKY: Well, that was an economic necessity. It was 1940 and I got out of high school, and that was the height of the *Depression!* The Depression didn't end in '33 like they say. *(Laughter.)* The only end to the Depression was the World War. So, I looked for all *sorts* of jobs, and I got a job for $8 or $10 a week. I tried it the first day — a cellar, it was like a big oven that you walked into, where you put these trays with the corks on it, and I figured if I lasted one day I would be okay. *(Laughter.)* I lasted till five o'clock, and the guy asked me to work overtime. The fumes from the paint were hurting my throat, so I said no. Even though I needed the job then, I said I couldn't do that every day

Then I answered an ad in the NEW YORK TIMES for a penciller, and it was for comic books. The guy lived in Forest Hills in an apartment, which was where they used to have the tennis tournaments every year, and his name was Chad. He worked for National Comics, and I think I got $2.25 or $2.50 a page. And all we did was copy **Milton Caniff!** *(Laughter.)* I did the pencilling, he did the inking. And then around '41 or so I met a friend of mine, **Al Jaffee** — do you know him?

PAUL: *I know of him.*

ALEX: We went to high school together. He was going up to **Will Eisner,** he wanted an excuse to go up there — because apparently he'd been up there so often. *(Laughter.)* He didn't have any more excuses, but he was trying to get a job! So he said, "I'll take *your* samples up

A piece capturing some of the occupants of Alex Kotzky's popular APARTMENT 3-G comic strip.

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enough humor possibilities in APARTMENT 3-G."

KOTZKY

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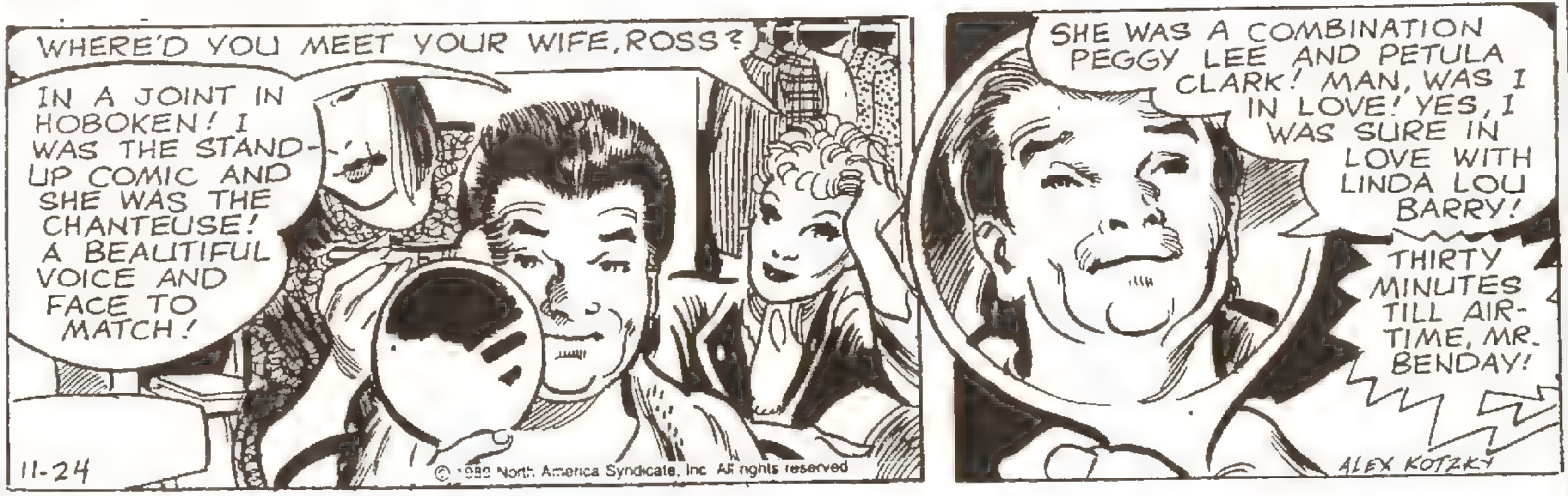
APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky


WHERE'D YOU MEET YOUR WIFE, ROSS?
IN A JOINT IN HOBOKEN! I WAS THE STAND-UP COMIC AND SHE WAS THE CHANTEUSE! A BEAUTIFUL VOICE AND FACE TO MATCH!
11-24
SHE WAS A COMBINATION PEGGY LEE AND PETULA CLARK! MAN, WAS I IN LOVE! YES, I WAS SURE IN LOVE WITH LINDA LOU BARRY!
THIRTY MINUTES TILL AIR-TIME, MR. BENDAY!
ALEX KOTZKY
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APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky

AS ROSS BENDAY DOES HIS OPENING MONOLOGUE, THE STUDIO AUDIENCE FOR THE NATIONALLY-TELEVISED SHOW RESPONDS WITH CONTINUED APPLAUSE!
11-27
CLAP CLAP CLA
OKAY! ENOUGH NOW! SO I'M GOOD! YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D COME OUT HERE AND BOMB, DID YOU?
THE OLD ROSS IS BACK, MISS THOMPSON! HE'S GOT THAT AUDIENCE IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND!
ALEX KOTZKY
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"If a person is really mad it's good to have him smiling."

WRITER/ARTIST

"I got a job then working for Will Eisner."

and show them to **Eisner** and maybe I can work in a deal for myself." So I got a job working with **Will Eisner!**

PAUL: *What I heard was you were kind of nervous because you were working for someone else and you had to, like, sneak up there through a fire escape or something?*

ALEX: Oh, no. But before that, when I was still in high school — because I needed to make money *somewhere* — I saw an ad for comics, and it was **Harry Chesler** — do you know him?

PAUL: *Yeah.*

ALEX: I went up there once and he turned me down — I was still going to high school at the time. I went there a *second* time and he turned me down. Then the third time I went up there on a Saturday. His place was on the second floor, and he was running the elevator! *(Laughter.)* Between the first and second floor he looked at my samples and rejected me for the third time. So, he

"Eisner looked at my work and said it was *grotesque*."

APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky
TINA!
HELLO, LESTER!
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8-9
MAY I TALK TO YOU?
YES, PLEASE DO---BUT NOT HERE ON THE SIDEWALK!
KOTZKY
APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky
LESTER WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE THIRTY MINUTES AGO! I'LL CALL THE APARTMENT! HE MAY HAVE MISUNDER-STOOD AND WENT THERE!
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8-10
TOMMIE, IS LESTER THERE? HE ISN'T? WELL, WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE HE WENT?
MAGEE, I THINK YOU ASKED ME THE SAME QUESTION WHEN I LEFT FOR WORK AT 6:30 THIS MORNING! IT'S 10 HOURS LATER---AND I STILL DON'T KNOW!
KOTZKY
APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky
I WISH YOU WOULDN'T BE SO SARCASTIC, TOMMIE! I TALKED TO LESTER AFTER YOU LEFT FOR WORK THIS MORNING AND HE WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET ME HERE AT FOUR THIS AFTER-NOON!
KOTZKY
8-11
© 1988 North America Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.
SO HE'S 45 MINUTES LATE! CALL MISSING PERSONS AND SEE WHAT THEY TELL YOU!
BANG

One of the last surviving soap strips — this example from 1989.

got sick of seeing me, and he sent me over to **Will Eisner.** This was a Saturday, and people worked on Saturdays in those days.

Eisner's place was more elaborate — it was a much bigger place than **Chesler's.** Now, **Eisner** denies that he was the guy — but I'm pretty sure it was him — he looked at my work and said it was *grotesque! (Laughter.)* Well, anyway, back to **Jaffee. Jaffee** got me this job with **Eisner** and I did backgrounds. He had about five artists working from there in the city, **Cuidera** who did BLACKHAWK, who did MR. MYSTIC, and —

PAUL: *Was Lou Fine there?*

ALEX: No, **Lou Fine** had his own studio.

PAUL: *Lou would work very long hours — didn't you used to ink him at the time?*

ALEX: I worked with Lou up in Connecticut when **Eisner** went in the Army. But we were talking about in the city, let's see there was **Cuidera, Powell** . . . and there was another guy, I should know his name.

PAUL: *Jack Cole?*

ALEX: No, **Jack Cole** lived up in Connecticut. **Nick Viscardi.** He did LADY LUCK in the SPIRIT supplement, then he got shot up in the war. I met him at the Cartoon Society some time after that, in the early '50s, and then he died a few years after that. But . . . oh, **Tex Blaisdell** worked on backgrounds at the same time.

Since I was the youngest of the bunch, I didn't get drafted until '43. Gradually everybody got taken in. **Eisner** went into the Army around January or February of '42, and that's when Lou took over. And I went in to do inking instead of just backgrounds, on THE SPIRIT. So I moved up to Connecticut, Lou moved up there, and it was *wonderful* up there. Stamford at that time was a small town in comparison to what it is today, and **Gill Fox** was up there — do you know **Gill Fox?**

PAUL: *No.*

ALEX: Gill Fox was the editor of the magazines. And **Jack Cole** was up there. **Jack Cole,** do you know of *his* work?

PAUL: *Oh, yeah!*

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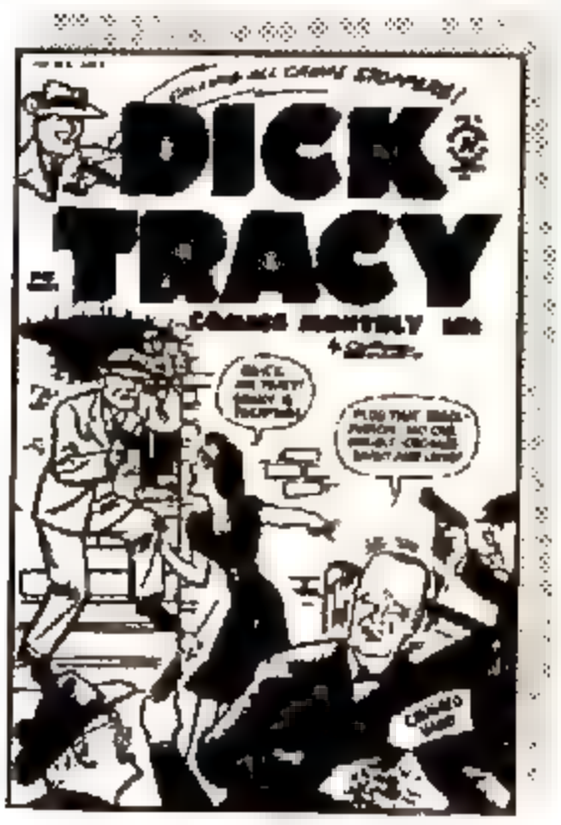

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"Jack Cole shot himself on a beach in Chicago."

ALEX: Yeah, 'cause he — as I understand it — he was the first cartoonist that **Hefner** put under contract. In addition to that, **Jack Cole** was doing a strip for the SUN-TIMES syndicate at the time, and of course that was —

PAUL: *What year was this?*

ALEX: Well, his strip probably started in the mid '50s sometime. It was a bigfoot strip . . . and I really don't remember the name of it.

PAUL: *I never saw that.*

ALEX: But the funny part is that it was all our goals to do a syndicated strip in those days.

PAUL: *Because you got a piece of the action?*

ALEX: Yes! And **Jack Cole** *had* his strip, syndicated strip, and he had the contract with PLAYBOY, and then **Craig Flessel** — do you remember his work?

PAUL: *I know his work.*

ALEX: He called me up one day, around '58 or '59, and said **Jack Cole** had committed suicide. He shot himself on a beach in Chicago. Nobody could understand it. I had seen him a few years previous to that at the Illustrators Club, and Jack was the type of guy that — he was *never* down for a second! He was a clown and always joyful. What would have compelled him to kill himself, I don't know.

As a matter of fact, we worked on a comic magazine around '48 — it was Magazine Village, I remember the outfit. Jack had this contract to do the books by himself, handle the whole deal, and he called me in on the deal. The thing never really got off the ground.

PAUL: *Was it never published?*

ALEX: I think it was published a couple of issues, but it just never went anywhere

PAUL: *What were you doing? Were you inking or pencilling or —*

ALEX: I was even writing, which I wanted to do. But I guess it wasn't very good because it didn't go anywhere. I'm not saying this about Jack's stuff, because he was a genius.

PAUL: *But also, you know, you need more of a chance to get out there to find an audience.*

ALEX: Yes. It never got off the ground. But the best part was working up in Connecticut on THE SPIRIT for **Lou Fine.**

PAUL: *You became quite good friends.*

ALEX: Yes.

PAUL: *From what I hear, he was a very private man.*

ALEX: Yes, he was.

PAUL: *But I heard that you guys were really very close. I'd like to know about that, about the working relationship, how you felt about the man?*

ALEX: Well, we ended up being the only ones in the office, because Arnold moved his outfit into New York — his comics were selling fantastically at the time because of the War. You know, usually you get a number of the magazines returned, but they weren't returning hardly *anything*. So they opened up an office on Lexington Avenue across the street from Grand Central Station. But we stayed in Stamford for a year more, until about March or February of '43. Then Lou moved into New York. Lou was originally from Brooklyn. So the two of us, if we hadn't become friends we wouldn't be able to stand each other.

EMMA KOTZKY: He was invited to our wedding.

PAUL: *Oh, yeah!*

BEA JAMES: They oughta know. *(Laughter.)*

EMMA: He was married to this girl from Vienna, was it?

ALEX: No, she was from Brooklyn, too.

EMMA: I thought you told me she came from Vienna. I thought she was Viennese.

THE SPIRIT by Will Eisner. Kotzky inks over Lou Fine's pencils.

NOT TLV, AMERICAN SPIRIT...
-HE WILL!!
HE WILL DIE OF MY BITE BEFORE LONG!! NOW, MASTAH, WE MUST GO TO LAWYERS OFFICE ... REVEAL WHO SPIRIT IS AND COLLECT MILLION DOLLAH .... HEE, HEE, HEE !!!

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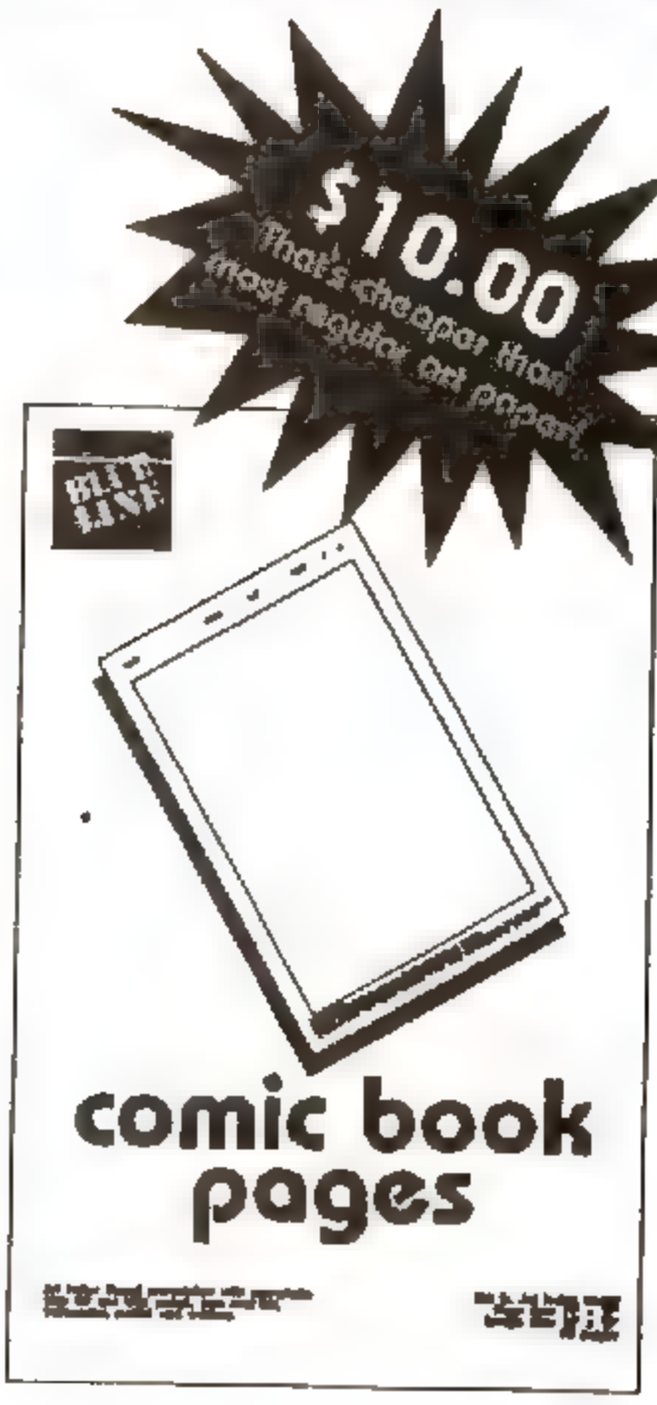

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"I remember when the first comic magazines appeared."

ALEX: No, no, they were both from Brooklyn. As a matter of fact, Lou would tell stories about his father — his father was a house painter. He didn't put up too much with Lou being an artist because he felt it was too insecure. But then Lou started doing very well — well for those days.

PAUL: *Doing the comic books or after when he was doing the commercial stuff?*

ALEX: This is when he started doing comics. Well, I guess his father probably came from the same school that many of our parents did, where it was more valuable to have a solid paycheck coming in every week than rely on something else. Comics had only been in existence for a few years at that time.

PAUL: *It was a very new artform.*

ALEX: Especially comic magazines. I remember when I was going to school the first comic magazines appeared on the stands, and of course that was like a *bonanza!* You'd scour the newspapers every day for a few strips, then suddenly you had a whole book of it!

PAUL: *It must have been like Christmas or something.*

ALEX: That's right. I even remember the first Sunday page of **Alex Raymond,** FLASH GORDON, which came out in the '30s. And then shortly after that there was **Caniff.**

PAUL: *That was a golden time. How did you feel growing up, seeing that stuff? What was that like?*

ALEX: Well, I imagine it's the same as actors who go out to Hollywood and suddenly they see somebody that they've admired all that time. **Caniff** was the idol, and **Raymond** — but moreso **Caniff** because of his dramatization. As a matter of fact, when I was going to high school a couple of friends of mine said they bicycled up and stopped off at **Caniff's** house uninvited, and I thought, "Gee, that's the ultimate!" *(Laughter.)* I would never have the nerve to do that.

And today, you know, you constantly get letters asking for originals, and of course you send them out. But it never occurred to *me* that you could write and get an original! I remember when I went up to Forest Hills to be interviewed by Chad, I actually saw an original for the first time that he had done. It was quite an experience. Since then you learn to put it in proper perspective. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Your background was working with Eisner, working with these other guys who were very good, and then the shift to doing APARTMENT 3-G. When Lou Fine started to do the*

PETER SCRATCH by Lou Fine, assisted here by Alex. October, 1965.

HAVEN'T I TAUGHT YOU WHAT HAPPENS TO LITTLE JERKS WITH BIG GUNS?
PUT THAT RIDICULOUS THING AWAY, HANS!
PETER SCRATCH
WE DO NOT NEED HIS SHABBY SERVICES ANY MORE! AND HE MUST NOT LEAVE THIS HOUSE ALIVE!
SIDNEY!
YOU MUST FORGIVE HIS DREADFUL MANNERS, PETER. AND PETER, MY DARLING, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO WALK OUT OF HERE A VERY RICH MAN?
"RIGHT NOW, ALL I WANT GUARANTEED IS THAT I WALK OUT!"
THAT'S THE MISSING REMBRANDT YOU RENTED ME TO DIG UP, HUN, HANSIE?
WHY PLAY GAMES PETER? I TOLD YOU I'D NOT ONLY MAKE YOU RICH...
I'D LOVE YOU... YOU DO WANT LINDA TO LOVE YOU, DON'T YOU, DARLING?
NOT WHILE I'M ON DUTY, BABY. HOW DO I GET RICH?
THIS REMBRANDT IS WORTH $2,000,000. YOUR SHARE OF THE SALE WOULD BE $250,000. INTERESTED?
I'M ALL EARS!
"WHY CUT ME IN ON THAT KIND OF LUSH DOUGH? —A SHAMUS WITH A BANKROLL THAT WOULDN'T CHOKE A GNAT?"
"HERE IT COMES—THE PITCH!"
AFTER ALL, PETER—SELLING THIS MASTERPIECE IS A MATTER OF MERELY ACCEPTING THE HIGHEST BID.
"O.K., SO WHY CUT A FORTY-BUCK A DAY OPERATOR LIKE ME IN ON THAT KIND OF SWINDLE?"

"Eisner would see a Hitchcock movie and

PETER SCRATCH and the ADAMS AMES stuff. I felt like he was doing your *style in some areas. Did you notice anything like that?*

ALEX: Well, I think **Lou Fine** was really an illustrator in the *true* sense of the word. In fact, he did the first really heroic stuff, UNCLE SAM, you know. That stuff was *excellent* artwork, 'cause nobody could pencil better than him. **Reed Crandall** was in his class — **Reed Crandall** worked for the same outfit, Arnold. But I think as the time went by **Lou Fine's** *interest* in comics withered. In the last few years he was painting. Let's see, he died around '71 or '72. As a matter of fact, I recommended him for one of the strips that my syndicate was putting out —

PAUL: *What was that?*

ALEX: That was the strip that was a takeoff on Bill Cosby and the program I SPY. And I also recommended **Alden Williams** — do you know him?

PAUL: *Yeah, yeah.*

ALEX: They selected Alden.

PAUL: *Boy, I would have liked to see Lou do that stuff.*

ALEX: Yeah. So, we would occasionally speak on the phone after that, and one day he said we had to all get together for something. Well, shortly after that **Gill Fox** called me and told me **Lou Fine** died. We went over . . . I forgot the Jewish expression for what they

EMMA: Shiva

ALEX: Shiva, yes. It was the first time I met his second wife. She took us into where he had been working, all of his paintings were around, so I saw what he had been doing. Illustration, really, that's what it was. It was sort of *eerie* because there was this studio and everything was around as if he'd just stepped out for lunch. It was sort of the same sensation I got in '78 when I became ill and had to go to the hospital, and my studio was a mess. I was away for a couple of months and when I came back to *my* studio I remembered what **Lou Fine's** was like, because everything was up in the air so to

APARTMENT 3-G
WHAT KINDA NEWS HAS LU ANN GOT FOR US, HOMER?
I'LL LE HER TEL YOU!
IS THAT TRUE, LU ANN?
YES, THE DOCTOR CALLED TOMMIE! WE'RE DRIVING OUT TO THE HOS-PITAL IN THE MORN-ING!
OKAY, NOW YOU MUSTN' GET TOO EXCITED OR NOTHIN', MARIA! YOU GOTTA GET TO BED EARLY AN' GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP! UNDER-STAND?
YES, EDDIE!

incorporate in THE SPIRIT the lighting effects."

speak. It brought that back to mind.

But to get back to **Will Eisner,** he would see a **Hitchcock** movie on Saturday night — this is when we were working on THE SPIRIT supplement, eight pages — and he would incorporate in THE SPIRIT all of the lighting effects that **Hitchcock** had done. **Eisner** in his own way was a genius. Remember, he pencilled eight pages of THE SPIRIT every week in *addition* to running the shop, which was comic magazines.

PAUL: *That's right, for Quality.*

ALEX: Yes. This is after he left **Iger** — it used to be **Eisner** and **Iger** together. And the funny part is that when he came out of the Army, he just stopped the whole thing. I think he did THE SPIRIT for awhile.

PAUL: *Didn't he make films or something in the Army?*

ALEX: Right, training films.

PAUL: *I would have liked to have seen some of those. I wonder if he could have gone into movies.*

ALEX: Could have. As a matter of fact, I was in the Infantry and I was ready to be shipped overseas, and at the last minute when we were getting our stuff together to go, there was an announcement for me to report to the office. They asked me if I would be willing to stay back for awhile and do artwork. I said, "Whatever you say!"

PAUL: *"No, I want to go to the front and get shot."* (Laughter.)

ALEX: The guys with my outfit went over and they shipped them right into Anzio.

BEA: Oh, my goodness.

ALEX: And they were shot up. So, I hung around Fort Meade for about eight months, and then I eventually got sent over anyway 'cause they couldn't keep me any longer. What I later learned is that the reason they were inspired to hold me back is that **Will Eisner** was in Washington and put in a request *for* me to go to Washington to work with him. But the major who was running the outfit decided, "Well, if he's okay for Wash-

BY ALEX KOTZKY
EDDIE, EDDIE---WE'RE GONNA SEE MAMA TOMORROW!
WHAT?
YOU'RE GONNA COME WITH US TOO, AIN'T YA, HOMER?
I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER IF JUST LU ANN AND TOMMIE GO WITH YOU AND MARIA!
© Field Enterprises, Inc., 1983

"They make a big deal now about collecting

APARTMENT 3-G
BY ALEX KOTZKY
HEARING TWO BOYS' DESPERATE CRIES FOR HELP, PETER PLUNGES INTO THE WATER AND SWIMS TO THEIR AID!
IT'S TOM AND FRANKIE— THEY'RE DROWNIN'!
ONE OF THOSE KIDS MUST BE IN TROUBLE! BETTER CALL FOR THE RESCUE SQUAD!
FRANKIE— HELP ME— I GOT A CRAMP!
LEGGO, TOMMIE!
IT'S TOM AND FRANKIE— THEY'RE DROWNIN'! SOMEBODY HELP THEM!

Here and next page, some of the earlier strips from APARTMENT 3-G.

ington, he's okay for us!" *(Laughter.)* So I hung around in Fort Meade.

I got to meet **FoK'ne**, whose father originally did the choreography for all the big ballets with . . . who's the guy who went mad? I can't think of his name. **Ninjinsky. FoK'ne** was a real character. I learned all about show business from him. He made a trip over to Europe on the airship Hindenburg and on the next trip that's when it blew up.

BEA: Oh, my goodness.

PAUL: *Now, with the crossover of having the influence of films in your work, were you aware at that time in the '40s that illustrators, like cartoonists, were doing continuity on a panel-by-panel basis?*

ALEX: No, it never occurred to us at all. As a matter of fact, they make such a big deal about collecting early comics, and all of that was strictly production basis

it was really garbage! *(Laughter.)* You know, "Get it done as quick as you can and get it out."

PAUL: *Did you ever keep any of your originals from that time?*

ALEX: No, because you never thought anything of it. The only one who kept originals to any extent was probably **Lou Fine.** Oh yeah, **Gill Fox** did, too. The thing that really interrupted it was the War. Suddenly you went away for two or three years, your whole life changed, and when we came back most of us got married. So, moving from place to place, you *discarded* all of that stuff. I got out in '46. I still worked in comics —

PAUL: *You were working in comics while you were still in the Army?*

ALEX: Yes

PAUL: *How did you manage that?*

ALEX: Well, I didn't do it when I was in the Infantry. But I came back in '45, and you just hung around until you were discharged. I was a regimental draftsman and I had an office, so I filled my time that way in the evenings. At that time I did PLASTIC MAN, I was pencilling. I never did inking until almost the early '50s.

PAUL: *When you were pencilling PLASTIC MAN, wasn't that a very hard thing for Jack Cole, because he wanted to do everything and he just couldn't?*

ALEX: He broke away by that time. After the War he started getting into his own projects, like the project that he called me in on for Magazine Village comic books. And then he did *endless* panel cartoons — PLAYBOY was a result of that.

PAUL: *He changed his style completely?*

ALEX: Changed it, but he had a weird mind. *(Laughter.)* He was really the forerunner of that type of humor. **Gill Fox** could tell you something about that because he was the editor at Arnold's at the time.

PAUL: *It sounds like you had a pretty tight group. Did you all move up at the same time, move out of New York to Connecticut?*

ALEX: Yes, that was it. Well, **Gill Fox** had been up there for a year or so before I was, because he was the editor. And the War broke it all up.

PAUL: *After the War the comics sort of went down. What did you do in the period, let's say, from '47 to '54? What was that like?*

ALEX: Well, the comics went down in '48 and '49. I stayed in comics, and then I started getting interested in commercial comics.

PAUL: *Johnstone and Cushing?*

ALEX: And **Elliot Caplin,** who writes JULIET JONES for **Stan Drake,** he did a lot of commercial comic books. And free-lancing. I suddenly realized I could do much *better* in commercial comics, so I got started with Johnstone and Cushing in '53. That's when I got to meet **Dik**

early comics, and all of it was really garbage!"

MARGO SAYS THE TWO OF YOU WOULD FEEL QUITE PROUD TO SEE COPIES OF YOURSELVES ALL OVER THE CITY! IS THAT TRUE?
I MUST ADMIT—IT WOULD MAKE YOU BOTH RATHER WELL-KNOWN—AND I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD GET A CERTAIN THRILL OUT OF THAT!
AND I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE—I FIND MARGO VERY ATTRACTIVE! I THINK YOU HEARD HER TELL ME THAT IF I SIGNED THE CONTRACT —SHE'D FEEL VERY PROUD TO SAY THAT SHE KNOWS NEWTON FIGG!
MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, TOMMIE— NEWTON'S A GENIUS— CHILDLIKE—BUT A GENIUS! HE HAS A WAY OF COMMUNICATING WITH KIDS THAT'S FANTASTIC!
HIS NEW MURIEL AND WENDELL BOOK WILL SELL AT LEAST 500,000 COPIES THIS YEAR! THE PUBLISHER IS BEGGING HIM FOR ANOTHER BOOK—BUT NEWTON CAN BE TERRIBLY STUBBORN!
HE'S THIRTY-TWO YEARS OLD! FIVE MORE THE ACME CONTRACT, WRITES ANOTHER BOOK OR TWO, HE'LL BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT—WOULD NEVER HAVE TO WORK ANOTHER DAY IN HIS LIFE!
FOR HIS OWN GOOD—I HOPE MARGO CAN GET HIM TO SIGN THAT CONTRACT, HARLEY!

Browne.

PAUL: *Was Mort Walker there as well?*

ALEX: No, he never worked for them. **Stan Drake** had left before I got up there.

PAUL: *Was Leonard Starr still there or was he gone too?*

ALEX: No, he came in when I was there.

PAUL: *Did you work together?*

ALEX: No, we never did anything together. He did his own work and I did mine.

PAUL: *Was Lou doing work for them?*

ALEX: No, he was working with **Don Commisarro.**

PAUL: *Who's that?*

ALEX: That's the guy who got all of the commercial work for **Lou Fine. Don Commisarro** was an inker, his brother was a letterer, a fine letterer, so somehow the association was made and Lou was doing the penciling. Sometimes they would have as many as three continuities in the Sunday advertising section, the Sunday comics, which was terrific. Sometimes **Johnstone and Cushing** didn't even have three, and they handled the bulk of the work.

PAUL: *Did you work with Lou on any of those assignments at all?*

ALEX: No, we never worked together . . . he gave me a couple of spot assignments after that, but really nothing. And then one day in around '53 or '54 I was getting *frustrated,* because in the advertising comics there was always so much copy that you never got a chance to really sit down and work. So I did some illustrations, black-and-white, for AMAZING STORIES, and that was *fun!* That was good. It wasn't too much money, but I really enjoyed the stuff and they made great samples to get commercial work.

PAUL: *God, I'd like to see that. So, you were doing science fiction and such.*

ALEX: Yes, that's true.

PAUL: *You see, I don't know anything about what your style looked like. From the '40s I've seen some inking, and I think I've got a Reed Crandall thing that you inked — but it's like, "Yeah, I know he did something in the '40s, but all I really know is APARTMENT 3-G."*

ALEX: I didn't know I *had* a style. *(Laughter.)* **Gill Fox** and I would always discuss . . . we were always imitating somebody else's style. I was imitating **Drake,** I was imitating **Caniff,** I was imitating **Murphy.** And then there was another style you used for commercial artwork. So, with the AMAZING STORIES stuff, I became interested in doing illustrations, but then I realized, when I looked at **David Stone Martin**— do you know his stuff?

PAUL: *No, I don't.*

ALEX: He had this penline that was this sort of an *aggravated* penline — *excellent* artist, he eventually did paintings and covers for TIME. I realized that I'd have to really study to compete, because I was moving into his area. I did illustrations for medical magazines; they were out in Great Neck, top-notch medical magazines and they were just starting. I was using **David Stone Martin's** style for the medical illustrations, and it worked very well. But I saw that in order to compete in the top flight stuff that I would really have to have some background behind me.

One day I was listening to the radio and they mentioned that **Milton Caniff** had become ill on a train to Philadelphia, so on the spur of the moment I sent a telegram to the hospital. Previous to that **Alfred Andriola** had asked me to do some work for him on KERRY DRAKE, but I was too busy, I didn't do it. But through him Milton Caniff got to know my name.

PAUL: *Because he used to work for him before as his assistant.*

ALEX: Yes.

PAUL: *What year is this?*

ALEX: This is around '55. So, I sent **Caniff** a telegram *hoping* that would get some response from him. And sure enough, because he was laid up he needed some assistance — although he had assistants at the time — he asked if I would be interested in doing some work

From Milton Caniff: "I did an entire sequence of 10 or 12

for him. He sent me a couple of pages of samples, and he liked what I showed him, so I did an entire sequence of ten or twelve weeks, did the whole job except for inking in the heads on the main characters — he did them

And then **Dik Browne** recommended me to **Stan Drake,** because **Drake** was looking for help on JULIET JONES. I did an occasional week or so, or two weeks at a time. And then sometime after that he decided he needed a rest, so he gave me the Sunday page to do. He said, "Here, you do the Sunday page, it's yours." He said I could have it as long as I wanted! But sure enough, as it happens in this business, he got restored or whatever — *(Laughter.)* I did it for three or four months and then he came back and said, "Well, I want it again."

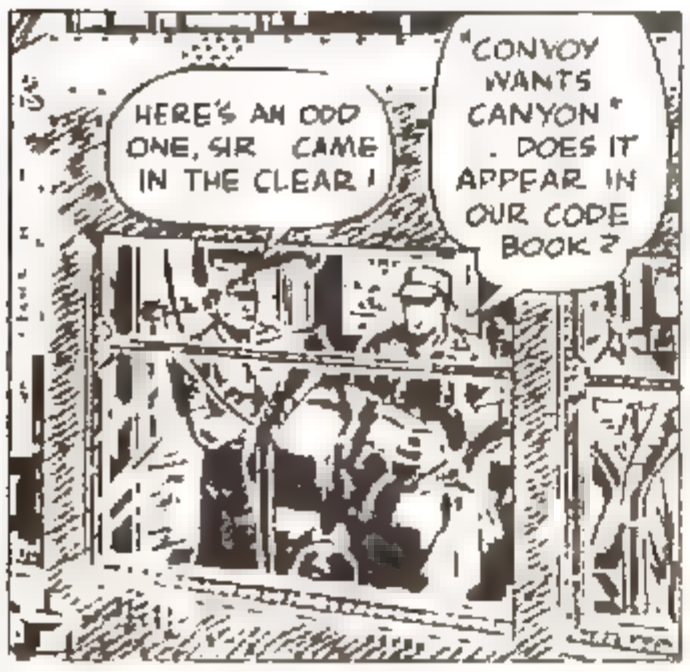
PAUL: *And this is all in '55?*

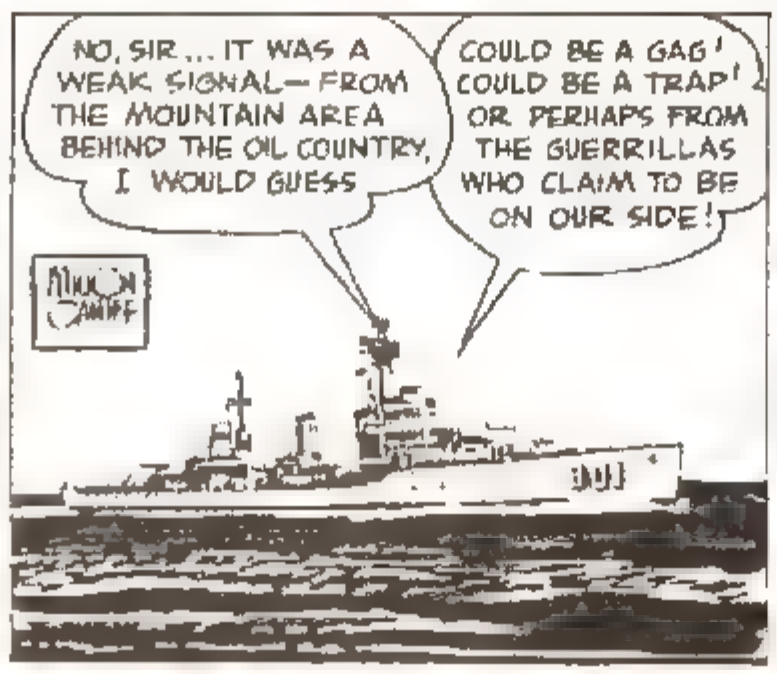
ALEX: No, this is later, in '56 or '57. But then, you see, **Milton Caniff** had been working on a project to do an extended comic strip to be sponsored by a product, so it didn't appear just on Sunday and the story would be continuous — it was for Philip Morris cigarettes. It was an itinerant worker, sort of like a garage mechanic or a carpenter, and he would have all of these adventures —

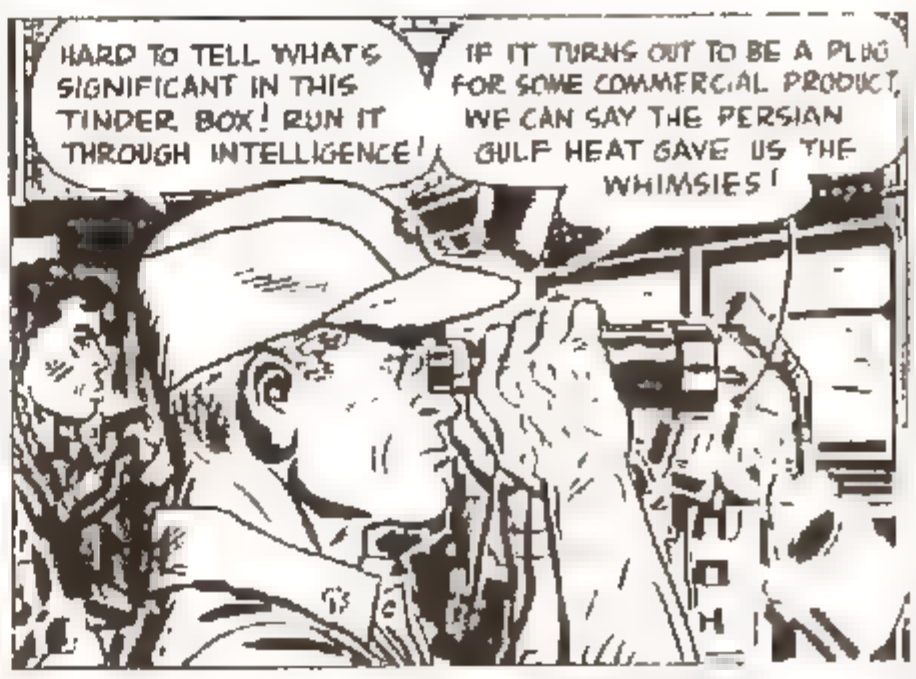
PAUL: *I've never seen that.*

ALEX: Well, it appeared for about six

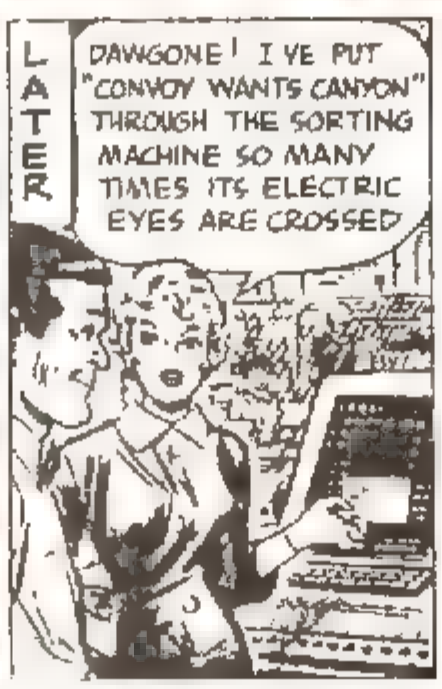
Some of the material Alex ghosted for Milton Caniff . . .




NO, SIR ... IT WAS A WEAK SIGNAL— FROM THE MOUNTAIN AREA BEHIND THE OIL COUNTRY, I WOULD GUESS
COULD BE A GAG! COULD BE A TRAP! OR PERHAPS FROM THE GUERRILLAS WHO CLAIM TO BE ON OUR SIDE!
MILTON CANIFF

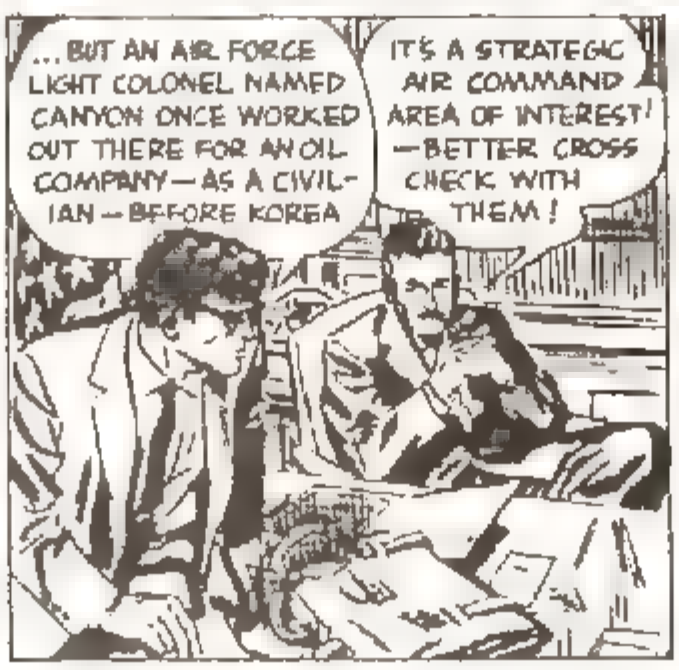

HARD TO TELL WHAT'S SIGNIFICANT IN THIS TINDER BOX! RUN IT THROUGH INTELLIGENCE!
IF IT TURNS OUT TO BE A PLUG FOR SOME COMMERCIAL PRODUCT, WE CAN SAY THE PERSIAN GULF HEAT GAVE US THE WHIMSIES!

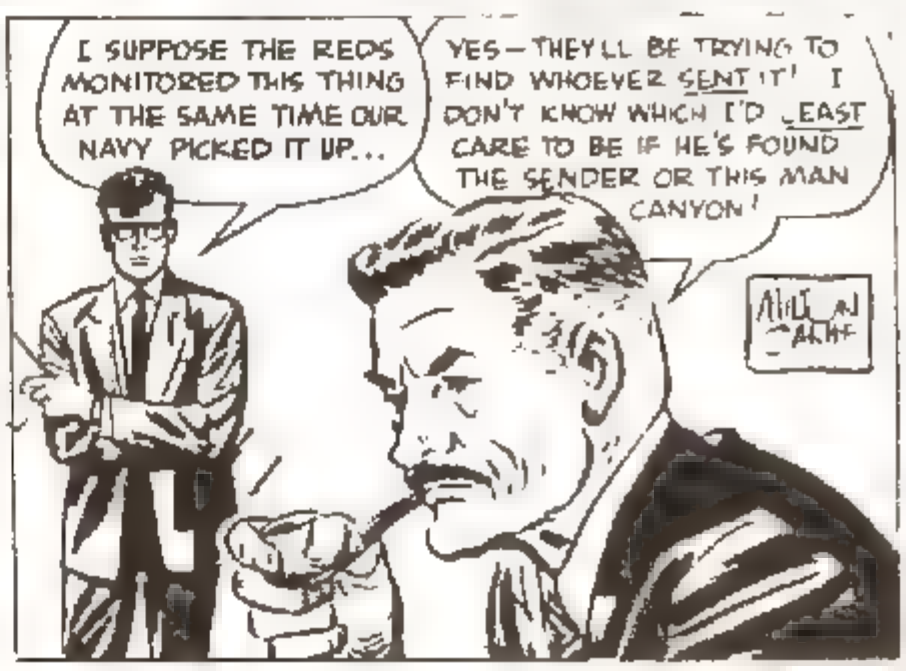
SIR, ONE OF OUR PATROL DESTROYERS IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA MONITORED A RADIO SIGNAL WHICH REPEATED "CONVOY WANTS CANYON". NO KNOWN CODE INVOLVED
BECAUSE IT CAME FROM THE OIL AREA IT MIGHT BE IMPORTANT—OR A HOAX
LET'S TRY IT ON THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN
MILTON CANIFF

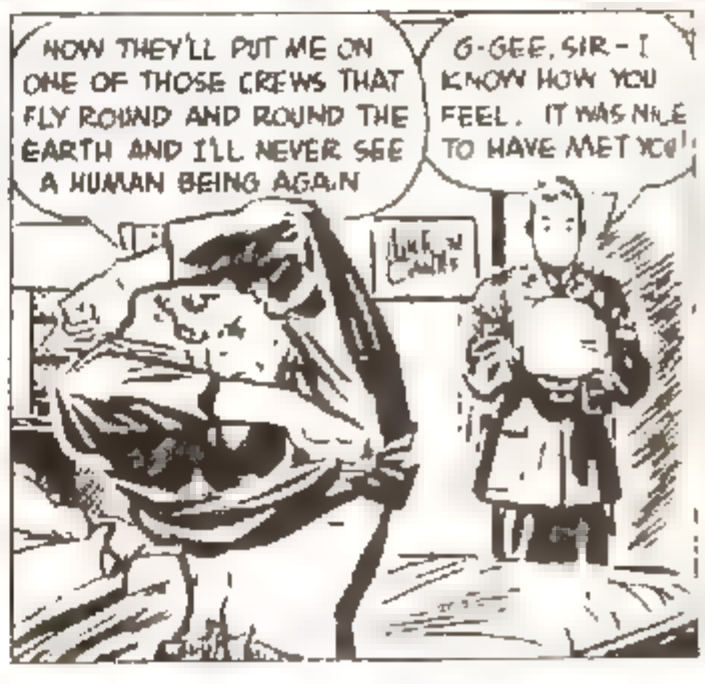


—AND IT COMES UP WITH— THE NUMBERS OF EVERY ESCORT THAT EVER SAILED FROM ANY PORT— THE NAME OF EVERY DITCH IN THE KNOWN WORLD —AND ONE LONE AIR FORCE OFFICER NAMED CANYON!

SIR, PHASE TWO ON THE RADIO MESSAGE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST OIL COUNTRY READING = 'CONVOY WANTS CANYON'
THE ELECTRONIC RECORDS SHOW ONLY NUMBERS OF CONVOYS IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA ..


...BUT AN AIR FORCE LIGHT COLONEL NAMED CANYON ONCE WORKED OUT THERE FOR AN OIL COMPANY—AS A CIVILIAN—BEFORE KOREA
IT'S A STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND AREA OF INTEREST! —BETTER CROSS CHECK WITH THEM!


I SUPPOSE THE REDS MONITORED THIS THING AT THE SAME TIME OUR NAVY PICKED IT UP...
YES—THEY'LL BE TRYING TO FIND WHOEVER SENT IT! I DON'T KNOW WHICH I'D EAST CARE TO BE IF HE'S FOUND THE SENDER OR THIS MAN CANYON!
MILTON CANIFF


NOW THEY'LL PUT ME ON ONE OF THOSE CREWS THAT FLY ROUND AND ROUND THE EARTH AND I'LL NEVER SEE A HUMAN BEING AGAIN
G-GEE, SIR - I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. IT WAS NICE TO HAVE MET YOU!

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weeks, except for inking the heads of the main characters."

months around '57 or '58. **Caniff** brought me in on it. He did the original groundwork, and **Allen Saunders** did the writing — he did MARY WORTH. But **Caniff** didn't have the time to be involved as far as the work goes, so he recommended me. It was a fantastic project because Philip Morris bought space every Sunday in *sixty* of the largest newspapers in the country, and this appeared every Sunday.

PAUL: *Did you get to sign it as well?*

ALEX: I don't remember, to tell you the truth. No, I don't think I did. If I did, I did it in a very small area . . . I can't remember. But what happened, Philip Morris changed advertising agencies and one day I got a call, they were going to continue it and they wanted to meet with me; and a half-hour later I got a call that they were not going to continue it, I was just to finish up what I had on hand

PAUL: *Now, when you were doing this stuff, did you ever feel that you were like a director?*

ALEX: Well, I really didn't think of it. But I remember when I first started 3-G I got a letter from somebody in Canada, a young artist, and he wanted to know what the mental process is I remember sitting in the car, because I didn't have much time and I was doing my correspondence while I was sitting in the car, writing the letter to him I mentioned the similarity between being a director and doing the strip. I had never done a strip, really, on such a continuous basis, as far as getting involved with the characters you really don't realize what you're doing until you really sit down and have to *develop* characters. It gets to the point where the characters are telling *you* what to do. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *They take over.*

ALEX: Yes, they take over

PAUL: *Have you ever found that in drawing the strip that you end up changing the script?*

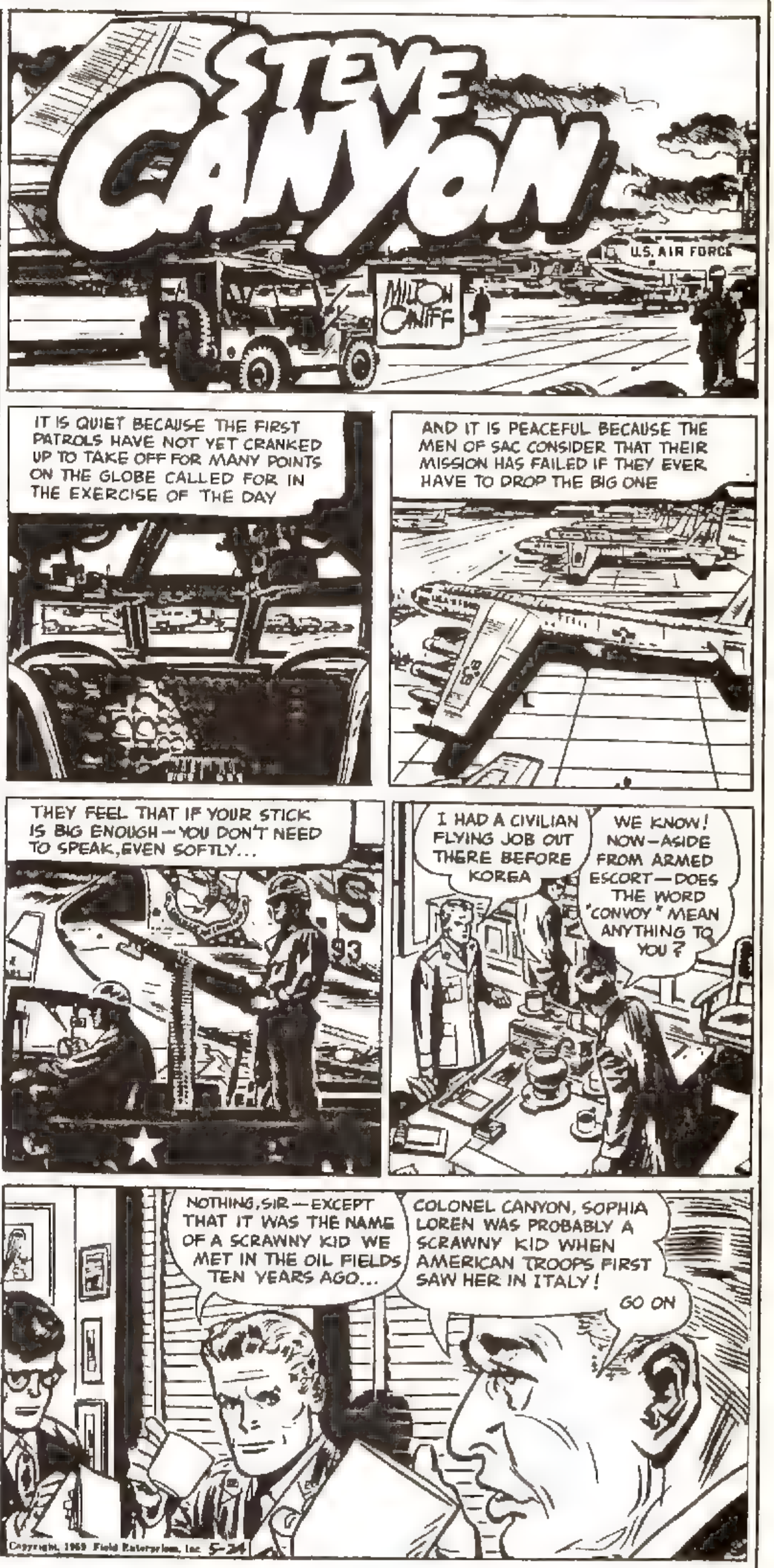
ALEX: What happens is Nick Dallas is very good that way. He'll send me a script and I'll get an idea to go in another direction, and if the thing is a positive suggestion he won't hesitate to take it.

PAUL: *Well, you see, that's another thing why I think this strip has been so successful. It's one of the few straight strips.*

ALEX: Yeah, we've been lucky that way.

PAUL: *In some papers it's all bigfoot stuff, and some of them aren't funny but they still run them. APARTMENT 3-G, do you have quite a few papers?*

ALEX: We've held onto our big markets. We never had the syndication that REX


STEVE CANYON
U.S. AIR FORCE
MILTON CANIFF
IT IS QUIET BECAUSE THE FIRST PATROLS HAVE NOT YET CRANKED UP TO TAKE OFF FOR MANY POINTS ON THE GLOBE CALLED FOR IN THE EXERCISE OF THE DAY
AND IT IS PEACEFUL BECAUSE THE MEN OF SAC CONSIDER THAT THEIR MISSION HAS FAILED IF THEY EVER HAVE TO DROP THE BIG ONE
THEY FEEL THAT IF YOUR STICK IS BIG ENOUGH — YOU DON'T NEED TO SPEAK, EVEN SOFTLY...
I HAD A CIVILIAN FLYING JOB OUT THERE BEFORE KOREA
WE KNOW! NOW — ASIDE FROM ARMED ESCORT — DOES THE WORD "CONVOY" MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
NOTHING, SIR — EXCEPT THAT IT WAS THE NAME OF A SCRAWNY KID WE MET IN THE OIL FIELDS TEN YEARS AGO...
COLONEL CANYON, SOPHIA LOREN WAS PROBABLY A SCRAWNY KID WHEN AMERICAN TROOPS FIRST SAW HER IN ITALY!
GO ON
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. . . continuing here with a partial Sunday page.

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"In the early '70s, concentration was on humor because

MORGAN had, or MARY WORTH, because those strips came out in the '40s and the early '50s and that was the bonanza time for story strips. When my strip started in '61, even the syndicate that I was with, the owner had *already* made plans to sell out to the Marshall Field group. Originally, it was Publishers Syndicate. They started in the early '40s. REX MORGAN started in the early '40s. And, if you remember, soap opera radio was very big in Chicago; at that time Chicago was the center for that. So that was the inspiration for Anderson, who started the syndicate, to begin REX MORGAN and that type of strips. But in the '60s PEANUTS had come out, and **Mel Lazarus's** MISS PEACH, and that was sort of the new trend in humor strips.

PAUL: *It really was a tough time to come out with a straight strip*

ALEX: Right, it was.

PAUL: *How did you feel about it at that time, knowing the atmosphere?*

ALEX: Well, it really wasn't that apparent to me because Anderson was really a very strong man as far as going out and selling But I didn't know that he was going to sell out within a year or so.

PAUL: *It could have been another thing like the Philip Morris one, "Thank you very much."*

ALEX: Yeah.

PAUL: *Did you get the jitters like that?*

ALEX: We were doing fine until the early '70s, until '70. The Herald Tribune Syndicate merged with the syndicate. Later they merged with **Post Hall,** he was the one who brought out the English strip about the guy who always drinks.

PAUL: *ANDY CAPP.*

ALEX: ANDY CAPP. He would go out and get all these odd strips and make successes of them, so he was good. In effect, he sold out to the syndicate and then he *ran* the syndicate for a few years. But then in the early '70s he left, too, and then we got a succession of editors and all their concentration was on humor because that's what they felt the newspapers would buy.

PAUL: *Now, let's go back to the beginning to when APARTMENT 3-G started. How did that come about?*

ALEX: I was ghosting for three strips, **Drake, Murphy, Caniff,** and then I did DUKE HANDY in '58. **Anderson** had spoken to me about a strip that was supposed to start at about the same time as DUKE HANDY . . . Oh, I know what happened, **Milton Caniff** wanted to do a strip with me, he would write it and I would do the artwork. He had sent my samples out to the syndicate, and they had *approved* it . . . In fact, **Anderson** had a strip in the works for me at the time, which turned out to be 3-G, but the **Caniff** thing turned up *first.*

I remember meeting him in New York, having lunch with him, **Anderson,** and telling him I was going on this other project. And he just *(hits fist in hand)* just like that! And then I think there was a little skullduggery involved. Caniff was . . . I don't know if he was ill or what, but he wanted to make sure he had somebody in reserve, and *that's* why he brought up this subject of doing another strip.

PAUL: *To keep hold on you?*

ALEX: Yeah. And then, sure enough, he decided that he wasn't capable of handling two strips at the same time, even though he was only writing it. Then **Anderson** got in touch with me again and got me together with **Nick Dallis.** This was about the end of '58, and we worked and discussed 3-G for two and a half *years!* What happened, *another* strip came out that was similar in concept, HONOR EDEN, and that delayed us for another nine months or so. And then finally the strip came out in May of '61.

BIG BEN BOLT
A TALCOTT PREEBLES!!
JUST AS YOU SAY SPIDER
FFFFFF
AND I WANT YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME WHILE I'M OUT GET THAT CRUMB A TALCOTT PREEBLES - BEAT HIS OWN BRAINS OUT WITH HIS OWN BILLY CLUB AND YOU PROMISED - NO QUESTIONS UNTIL I DO WHAT I GOTTA DO
I'LL BE SEEING YOU LATER, CHAMP
I'LL HAVE SOME CLOTHES FOR YOU
DON'T NEED 'EM PAL JUST HAND ME OVER THE GLOVES
SOME COFFEE SIR?
NO THANK YOU SOMETHING HAPPENING OUT THERE?
LATER.

BIG BEN BOLT Sunday page ghosted by Alex for John Cullen Murphy.

Copyright ©1968 Newsday, Inc

that's what they thought the newspapers would buy."

THE BLACK WIDOWS, SIR?
RIGHT, CANYON! OUR INTELLIGENCE REPORTS ARE VERY SKETCHY ON THIS.
.BUT THIS IS HOW IT BREAKS DOWN...
THE RED UNDERGROUND AND THE LOCAL COMMIE PARTY ARE GETTING BOLDER IN THIS PART OF THE MIDDLE EAST
MILTON CANIFF
THEY SOMETIMES DO AWAY WITH ANTI-REDS -AND THERE HASN'T BEEN MUCH DONE ABOUT IT IN LOCAL HIGH PLACES
BUT IN LOW PLACES THERE HAS BEEN ACTION...AND THAT IS WHERE THE BLACK WIDOWS ENTER...
ALSO-IT IS WHERE YOU COME IN!
COL. CANYON, THE WIDOWS OF THE DEAD ANTI-REDS WHO ONCE LIVED HERE- HAVE FORMED AN ALL-WOMAN GUERRILLA GROUP
SINCE THE WOMEN IN THAT SECTION STILL WEAR VEILS, THESE BITTER FEMALES HAVE A PERFECT DISGUISE IN THEIR ALL-BLACK COSTUMES
IT IS SAID THAT EACH MEMBER WEARS A LIVE BLACK WIDOW SPIDER IN A METAL CONTAINER HUNG AS A LOCKET ON A CHAIN AROUND HER NECK.
MILTON CANIFF
SHE CAN USE IT TO KILL AN ENEMY — OR IF SHE IS TRAPPED, TO KILL HERSELF..
NOW YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHAT ALL THIS HAS TO DO WITH YOU!
YOU DON'T NEED TO COVER UP THE GULP, CANYON! WE UNDERSTAND HOW YOU MUST FEEL AT THIS POINT!
SIR, THE STORY OF THE BLACK WIDOWS IS FASCINATING...
ONE OF OUR STATE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN SERVICE MEN WAS IN A MOTORCADE IN THE HILLS
THEY WERE HELD UP AND ROBBED BY A BAND OF THESE BLACK-CLAD WOMEN
NO ONE WAS HURT, BUT THE LEADER SPOKE ENGLISH THAT WAS FULL OF WORLD WAR II G.I. SLANG!
MILTON CANIFF
COL. CANYON, DID THE CHILD YOU KNEW AS 'CONVOY' SPEAK IN THAT MANNER?
YES, SIR.
THEN PACK YOUR TOOTH BRUSH!

Copyright ©1959 Field Enterprises, Inc

STEVE CANYON ghosted by Alex (faces inked by creator Milton Caniff).

PAUL: *Those sample strips that you did to initially sell it, were they used?*

ALEX: Some of them. I still had the advertising style in my artwork, and they felt it wasn't *robust* enough for a strip.

PAUL: *Did you find it difficult or refreshing to go from that Murphy style on BEN BOLT to switch to Caniff on CANYON and then to go again over to Stan Drake's style? Did you ever get confused at times?*

ALEX: No, not confused. I found **Stan Drake's** style easiest to work in. It was because of the stuff I did for AMAZING STORIES; the style I used there was most similar to **Stan Drake's** work.

PAUL: *How did you like working on three different strips?*

ALEX: It didn't bother me at all, I was used to it. In comic books you're always working on a different writer, or a different style, and so it was just a natural thing to do. You'd say, "Okay, what's on the schedule for today!" And then you'd do it. It's just like working on movies; one movie has one style and then the next movie has another style. As a matter of fact, as I was saying before, when I started the strip I didn't know *what* my style was.

PAUL: *How did your comic-strip style come about then?*

ALEX: Well, I knew I wanted to do something in **Drake's** style, because I felt that he animated his stuff more. He was more dramatic in his storytelling, *very* dramatic in his storytelling. As a matter of fact, when he started his strip I thought it would wipe out **Raymond's** work, I thought it was so good. I think the thing that held him back, to some extent — even though he is an *excellent* artist — he would use Polaroid almost consistently for figure work. When he transposed it from the Polaroid to the paper, sometimes he didn't change proportions, so you would have the proportions that you would get if you photographed the figure. He animated his stuff but it still looked like it was taken from the camera to some extent.

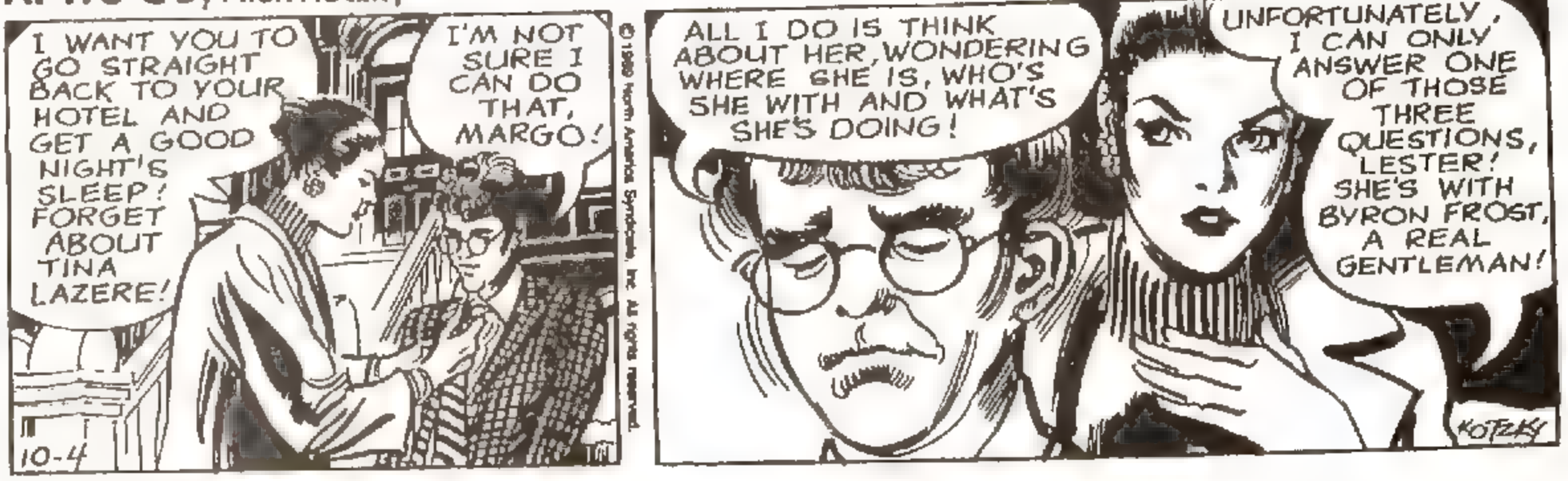
PAUL: *Did you ever share a studio with him or anything like that, or with Leonard Starr?*

ALEX: No, I never shared. But I used to bring my work up — when I worked on his stuff up to his place in Westport. And he was a character. You know, he was in the car when **Raymond** was killed, **Alex Raymond.**

PAUL: *Yeah.*

ALEX: I think his ears were torn down, and he broke a shoulder or his collar bone. The funny part, one of the days when I delivered work up there he said, "Okay, let's go out to lunch." And he had a Corvette! When I got in the car I couldn't help thinking of what happened when he was in the car with **Raymond!**

"The story doesn't have to be all that good."


APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky
I WANT YOU TO GO STRAIGHT BACK TO YOUR HOTEL AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP! FORGET ABOUT TINA LAZERE!
I'M NOT SURE I CAN DO THAT, MARGO!
10-4
ALL I DO IS THINK ABOUT HER, WONDERING WHERE SHE IS, WHO'S SHE WITH AND WHAT'S SHE'S DOING!
UNFORTUNATELY, I CAN ONLY ANSWER ONE OF THOSE THREE QUESTIONS, LESTER! SHE'S WITH BYRON FROST, A REAL GENTLEMAN!
KOTZKY
APT. 3-G By Alex Kotzky
GOOD MORNING, MR. FROST!
COME INTO MY OFFICE--- AND BRING YOUR DICTATION PAD WITH YOU!
10-5
SIT DOWN, PLEASE!
MISS MAGEE, DID YOU GIVE LESTER DEXTER MY UNLISTED HOME PHONE NUMBER?
KOTZKY

More of Alex's APARTMENT 3-G.

(Laughter.) And sure enough, you know, the Corvettes of those days had a lot of horsepower behind them. I guess to impress me he put his foot down! *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *What a kidder, oh man. Did you know Alex Raymond at all?*

ALEX: No. I saw him at the Cartoonists meetings, but it was a case, like happens in Hollywood, of you see somebody you admire and just stand off in the distance.

PAUL: *I get up and say hello.*

BEA: But you're different

PAUL: *I must tell you, I'm more in awe of yourself than I would be of Spielberg or another director, because to me you guys are the directors. That's what you do in your work and it's very exciting. When I look at your work I see it's tough because we're dealing with a soap opera, we're dealing with three women, there's a lot of talking — but you make it very interesting and there's real acting in there. Really, it's like British theatre in a sense.*

ALEX: One thing I learned is that in the strips when you draw it, if a person is really mad it's good to have him smiling. It's in such direct *contrast* to what he's saying that it'll startle the reader. And also, in an action scene where you'd think the guy would project himself forward, he really goes back because that's when he summons up all of his energy.

PAUL: *That's what I like, it's very natural. Did you ever want to be an actor at any stage? Did you ever toy with the idea?*

ALEX: No, I never had the nerve to do anything like that. I always liked movies.

PAUL: *What were some of your favorite films?*

ALEX: Oh, everything. All of **John Ford's** stuff. Of course, CITIZEN KANE. I could take anything from **Laurel and Hardy** to even today on TV. The story doesn't have to be that good as long as there is terrific camera work.

PAUL: *Sure. Like MIAMI VICE, the stories were no big deal but that camera work!*

ALEX: Yeah, it impressed me. It seems to me, although I don't know anything about direction, it seemed very crisp in how it moved from scene to scene.

PAUL: *I think chances are it was storyboarded. You could have been a director, you could still be a director.*

ALEX: Well — *(Laughter.)*

BEA: He's not sure he wants to. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *But 3-G* screams *to be made into a series.*

BEA: Yeah.

ALEX: Do you have any idea – because Disney had suggested a half-hour program

PAUL: *As a daily thing?*

ALEX: No, once a week that I know of.

PAUL: *I'd do it as an hour. Well, how did you feel about it when you found out that this may well go through?*

ALEX: Well, we've gone through this before. The first time was in the mid '60s, there was something involving a soap opera, a daily. At that time ABC was the one. And AT&T or ITT, whichever, they were going to *buy* ABC, but the government said it would be restraint of trade so the deal didn't go through, and hence that project fell through. Then we had a couple of others . . . Who was the guy that played Bat Masterson?

PAUL: *Gene Barry.*

ALEX: His outfit was interested, and **Nick Dallis** met him and they talked about it. That fell through. And then in the mid '70s, around '74, the M*A*S*H group got involved.

EMMA: This has been going on for a long time.

ALEX: And **Gene Reynolds** took it to the original writer of M*A*S*H, the one who conceived the idea, and he said he didn't see enough humor possibilities in it.

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"I knew that I wanted to be a cartoonist."

Interviewing Don Heck is one of the nicest assignments I've undertaken during my COMICS INTERVIEW tenure, as Don was the artist on a Swordsman tale I did for AVENGERS SPOTLIGHT (and he did one heck of a job on it, too!). Don's been in the comics game for about four decades now, and in that time he's been the original artist on Iron Man, lent his able talents to THE AVENGERS, THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, WONDER WOMAN, THE TEEN TITANS, SUPERGIRL, SUPERMAN, BATMAN, THE FLASH, BATGIRL, DRACULA and just a whole bunch of other good stuff. So I was really glad to track Don down and get from him the tale of a long career in the comics biz. Here it is . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *Let's start out with the origin of Don Heck. In your bio piece in AVENGERS ANNUAL#1 you say that you became an artist when you first tried to draw Donald Duck.*

DON HECK: Yes, when I was a kid that was the first one I started with. At least my aunt tells me that — I must have been five or six or something like that.

LOU: *I guess that's when all of us start getting involved with cartoons and comics and all of that good stuff.*

DON: Right, in other words, you're quiet, your mother and father take you out somewhere and you grab a piece of paper and start scribbling.

LOU: *Tell me a little something about yourself, who you are, and what got you onto the road of becoming a comic-book artist.*

DON: I always liked strips. I used to go over to my grandfather's on Sunday and they had the JOURNAL AMERICAN there. And all of a sudden, wow, you know, everybody's in the kitchen back in those days — and you're in the other room and you have this whole thing of drawings in front of you. I guess I liked **Milton Caniff** quite a bit.

LOU: *TERRY AND THE PIRATES was quite a strip.*

DON: Oh, it was fantastic!

LOU: *The thing is, people growing up right now, even people like me who started reading comics in the late '50s, early '60s, didn't realize how good those things were back then. Not to mention being printed in larger sizes.*

DON: Much more subtle colors. You would have to go back to PRINCE VALIANT and that stuff. You had all these muted colors which were beautiful. I have a collection of PRINCE VALIANT and STEVE CANYON from the '40s, '50s and '60s.

LOU: *And of course back then they could afford to print them better, because it didn't cost so much.*

DON: It's funny because they didn't charge that much, either.

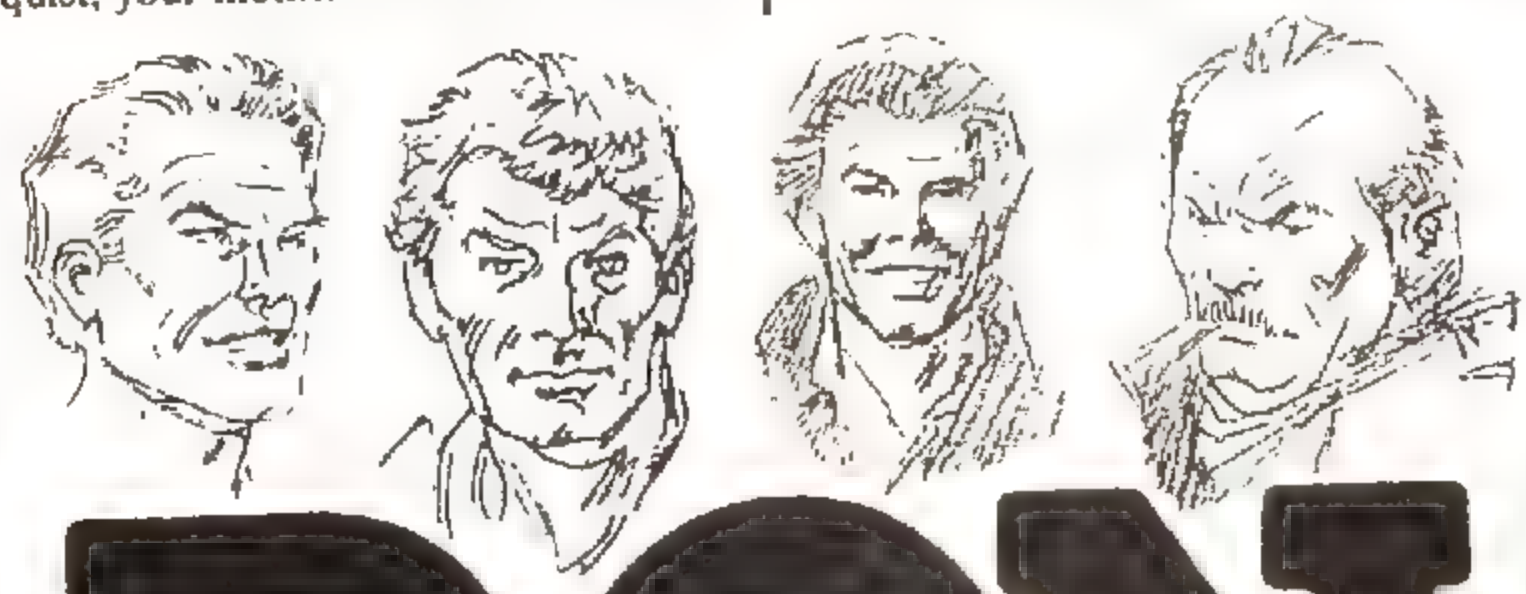
LOU: *I guess that was a long time before inflation.*

DON: And before everybody decided the super pay they were going to get and they were only going to give half the amount of effort.

LOU: *Unfortunately, that's the story from the '60s onwards. You say that a college friend, in the early '50s, got you into the business when he turned down an interview with a comics publisher because it wasn't in his line of work?*

DON: We had graduated school together, from what is now New York State Tech, I think. It is similar to a community college nowadays. It was the first one which was opened up in Brooklyn. We were the first class, we were the guinea pigs. Actually, **Tom Dewey** came to our graduation. He was actually still governor at the time. I guess he had lost the presidential election to **Truman** so he went back to being governor. So I graduated with this guy and the first year I was out there wasn't a lot of stuff available. I got a call from someone, I can't remember who, but he knew I wanted to be a cartoonist, so I went for the interview.

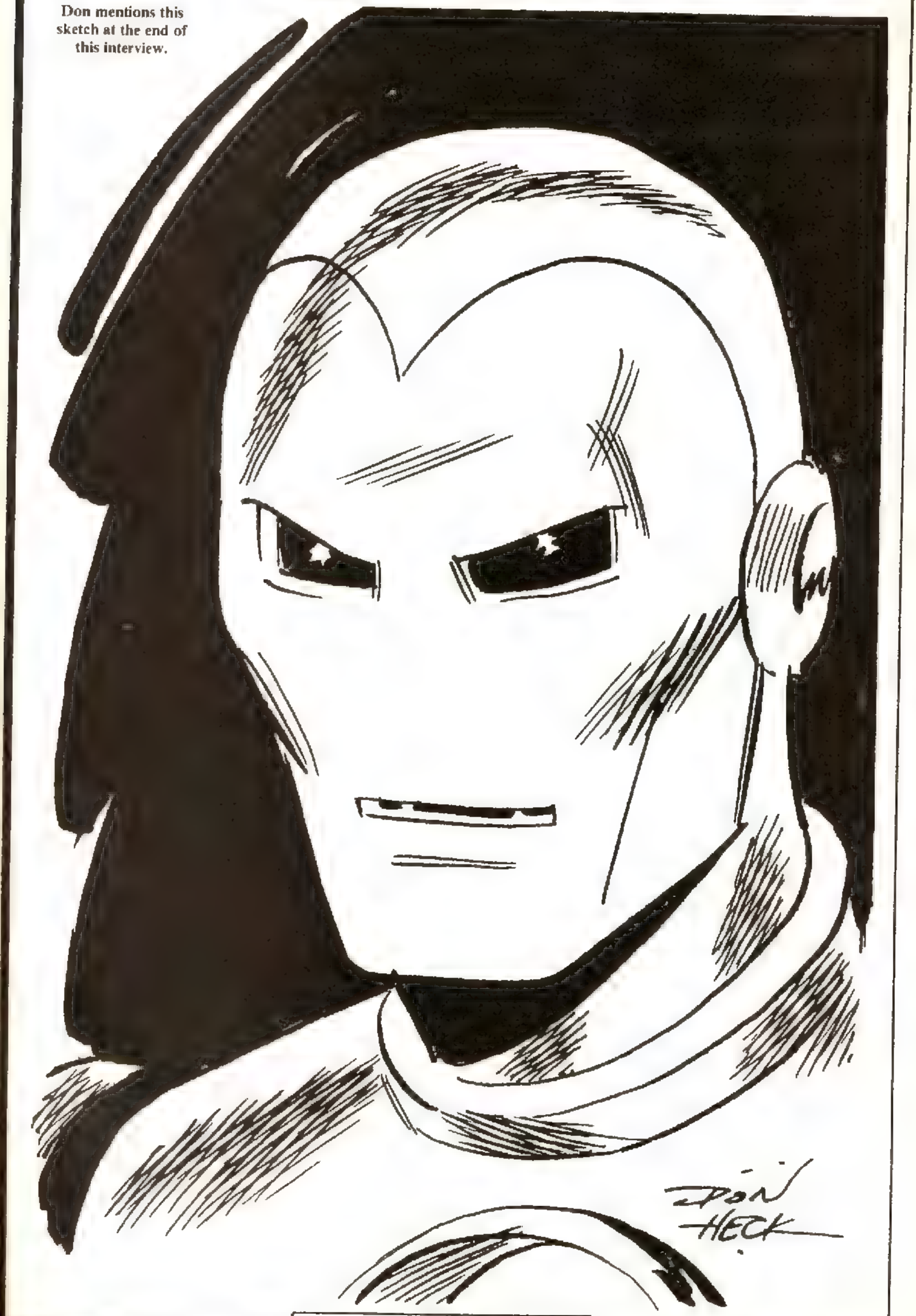
LOU: *Who was the interview with?*



Various character head sketches by Don.

DON HECK

Don mentions this sketch at the end of this interview.

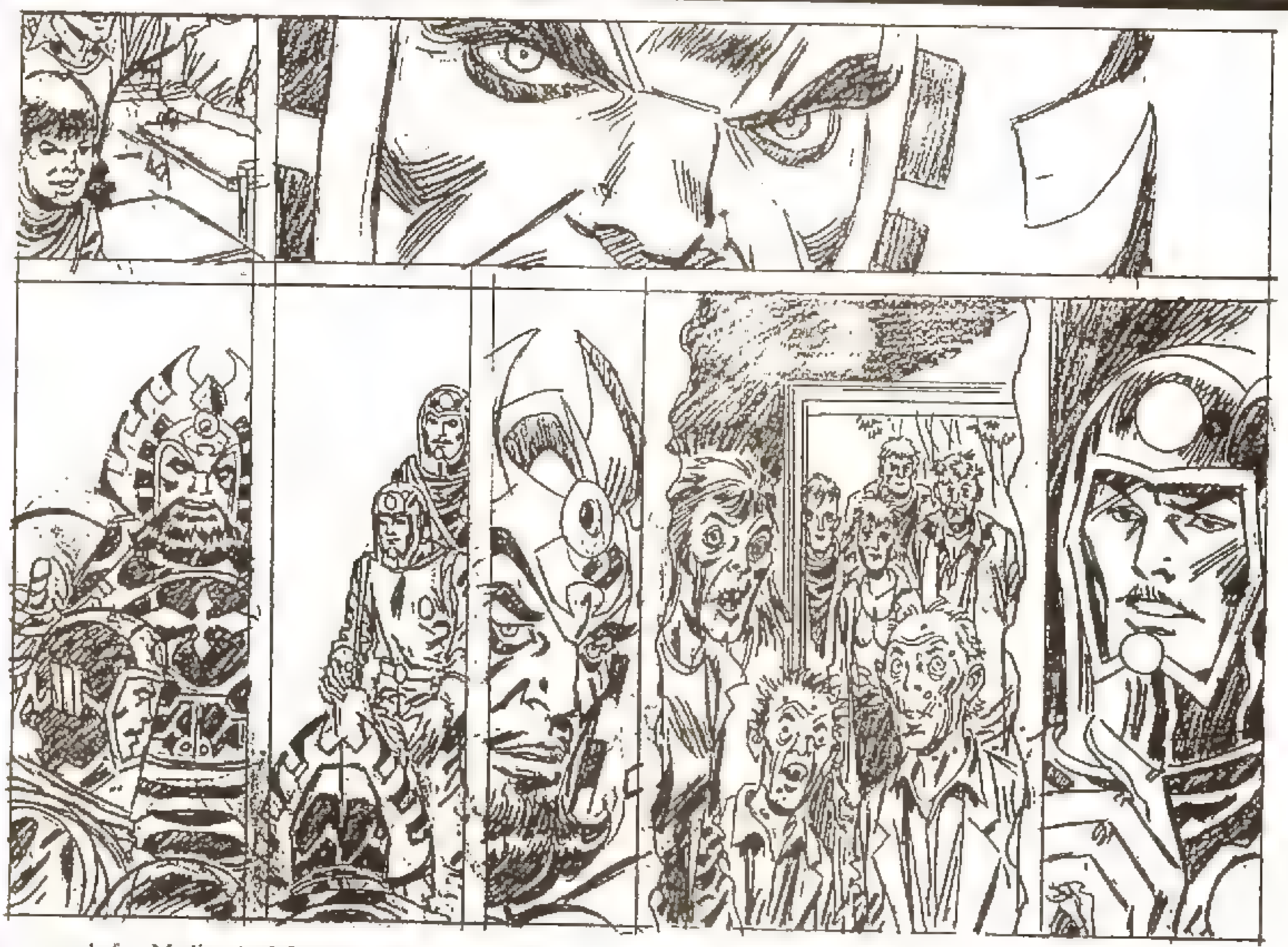


"I went to see Stan Lee and he said, 'I know what the hell

DON: Harvey Publications. I worked paste-up and that sort of stuff, you know.
LOU: *Who actually interviewed you?*
DON: **Leon Harvey** interviewed me. It was a Saturday afternoon. I said to the guy, "I have a date tonight, it's five o'clock in the evening, are you kidding or what?" I said, "It's going to take me an hour to get there." I was in Queens and they were in New York City. He said, "We'll wait," so I went in anyway
LOU: *You eventually ended up doing artwork for them?*
DON: Yeah, I worked inside for two years. Then I decided that I was going to try and go freelance. I did all paste-up and stuff on the reprints at Harvey. I did work on TERRY AND THE PIRATES up until the end.
LOU: *In 1952 or so, you started at . . .*
DON: March 21 to be exact.
LOU: *I guess that is a thing you tend to remember! You started at Comic Media, right?*
DON: First, I worked two other places. In fact, the first day I went to go out, I called up and got three places to show my stuff. The first two places, I got jobs. I didn't go to the third place, because I was afraid they'd give me a job, and then I'd have to have them all done at the same time. I did wind up with Comic Media and **Allen Hardy.** Allen had worked for Harvey also in circulation and then he left and decided to open up his own place. He called me up and I ended up doing covers and inside stuff. I even ended up doing the lettering on a couple of the first few books.
LOU: *I remember your cover from HORRIFIC, which has a guy's head with a bullet hole through it.*
DON: Yeah, well, there was no real gore and stuff like that — like it was at EC. In those cases, the writer writes it out and the artist tries to fulfill what the writer writes.
LOU: *You did a character called Johnny Danger, a detective series.*
DON: Something like that; it was so long ago. I think it was in DANGER COMICS or something like that. I did the lead character — you're talking about something I did forty years ago. I could draw him, I remember what he looked like, but don't ask me his name.
LOU: *Who else did you freelance for?*
DON: I worked for Toby, Quality, a few others.
LOU: *What were working conditions like then, back in the '50s?*
DON: Nothing spectacular. You went in, picked up your job, and then went home and worked on it. I did a job for Quality and the guy gave me the job and asked me what other stuff I had worked on. I told him, "This was my first job." I looked at him and said, "Hello!" He gave me a decent price to do the work. *(Laughter.)* I didn't hear from them again for about a year and he wanted me to work on BLACKHAWK. He called me and I said I was going to take a chance because, after all, it was a whole year before I got the second job. You can't blame them, I was just a beginner.
LOU: *Of course, the Wertham thing and the Senate investigations put a lot of companies out of business around 1955. In the industry, as it was back then, was there a lot of paranoia about what Wertham was doing, that you might lose your jobs?*
DON: The outfit I was working for at the time was Comics Media, around 1954 they went out of business. There were other things happening at that time. A lot of companies were going into the 3-D comics and things like that. They eventually lost a lot of money. In those days, they had to have a very high percentage of sales in order to break even. Generally in the 60% range to break even, even though they weren't paying all that great but somebody was getting the money. You know, I don't know who, I don't know what the deal was back in those days.
LOU: *You feel that the 3-D craze put a lot of them under?*
DON: I think it was the straw that broke the camel's back, because so many other things were happening at the same time. As you say, they were blaming juvenile delinquency on comics, that sort of thing. Things haven't changed much in forty years, now somebody else is doing it and blaming TV.
LOU: *Maybe they could tell us what people like Ivan Boeskey were reading . . .*
DON: I'd like to know because he made a lot of money. *(Laughter)*
LOU: *Marvel, or Atlas as it was known back then, was one of the companies that was still alive and kicking?*
DON: Yeah, right, they were called Timely.
LOU: *Why don't you tell me about your early days at Marvel?*
DON: **Pete Morisi** had gone up there to see **Stan Lee** and Pete had brought a book with him, on which he had done

Here and next page: Pencils from MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS with the Overmind character.

you can do for me. I've got a job for you.' That was 9-1-54."



some work for Media. And Stan kept pointing at my stories, and he finally said, "If you want **Don Heck** to come up here, why the hell don't you tell me – he's looking for work, too." *(Laughter.)* Pete called me but I was gone for a few days. I finally went up to see **Stan Lee** and he went outside to look at my work and looked at two pages and he said, "I know what the hell you can do for me, I've got a job for you." And that was September 1, 1954.

LOU: *Was it the same way for Marvel, pick up the job and then bring it back in the morning, that sort of thing?*

DON: In most cases, yes, you would pick it up, take it home, work it up, and then take it in for Stan to look over and take another one home with you. Very casual, this was in the '50s. In April of 1957, that was when Marvel stopped giving out work. They were called Magazine Management at the time. They were cutting back and just going to use inventory, and almost all of the artists were let go, at that point.

LOU: *Were you also let go?*

DON: Yes, everyone — all of us were let go. I got a call a year later from Stan and he asked if I would be interested in doing more work. I called DC but couldn't get any work and there weren't many companies left. I went to a friend who kept saying, "Look, if you ever have any time let me know and maybe I'll have some work." I called him and said, "Look, I have all the time in the world." And I wound up doing model airplane plans and that sort of thing.

LOU: *So you went back to work in 1958, which would have been after they got the thing straight with their distributors?*

DON: When you went in, then, Stan was in one little room back in the corner It's amazing when you go in there now, and see what they have - against what they had, way back then. I went in to the Christmas party a few years back and I looked around and I said, "I don't know anybody." Back in those days there were only four or five guys, **Kirby, Dick Ayers, Ditko** and myself.

LOU: *What type of memories do you have of working with those guys?*

DON: Well, Jack was always in there, because he lived near there. Jack was so proficient it was incredible. In fact, I went in there a couple of times, and went to the same place to pick up the same paper he was using, because it wound up being good paper and it was reasonable. I'd go in there and he'd be sitting there, with his little drawing table and the cigar smoke. The room was filled with pocket books, all science-fiction stuff. He was a very avid reader. He was unbelievable, he would turn out five, six pages a day. I was struggling and he was knocking this stuff out like it was going out of style. He was a very nice guy, very pleasant.

LOU: *What about Steve Ditko, did you ever get to know him?*

DON: I know of him, we met a few times, but not like I got to know **Kirby. Dick Ayers** I got to know a little bit better.

LOU: *After you got back on track you did a zillion fantasy and western stories.*

DON: That was what was available.

LOU: *I remember one story about dogs taking over the world. (Laughter.)*

DON: One time, I was looking at a job that was upside-down on a desk and I thought, "Gee, that doesn't look too bad." When I turned around to get a better look at it, I realized it was one of *mine*. In those days, you'd do one job, forget about it, and move on to the next one. It wasn't a standard character. When you did a regular character then you were aware of who was doing it.

LOU: *You did a character for one of the jungle books and, when I saw it, he looked an awful lot like Tony Stark, all the way down to the moustache.*

DON: Well, that was normal. When you're drawing out of your head like

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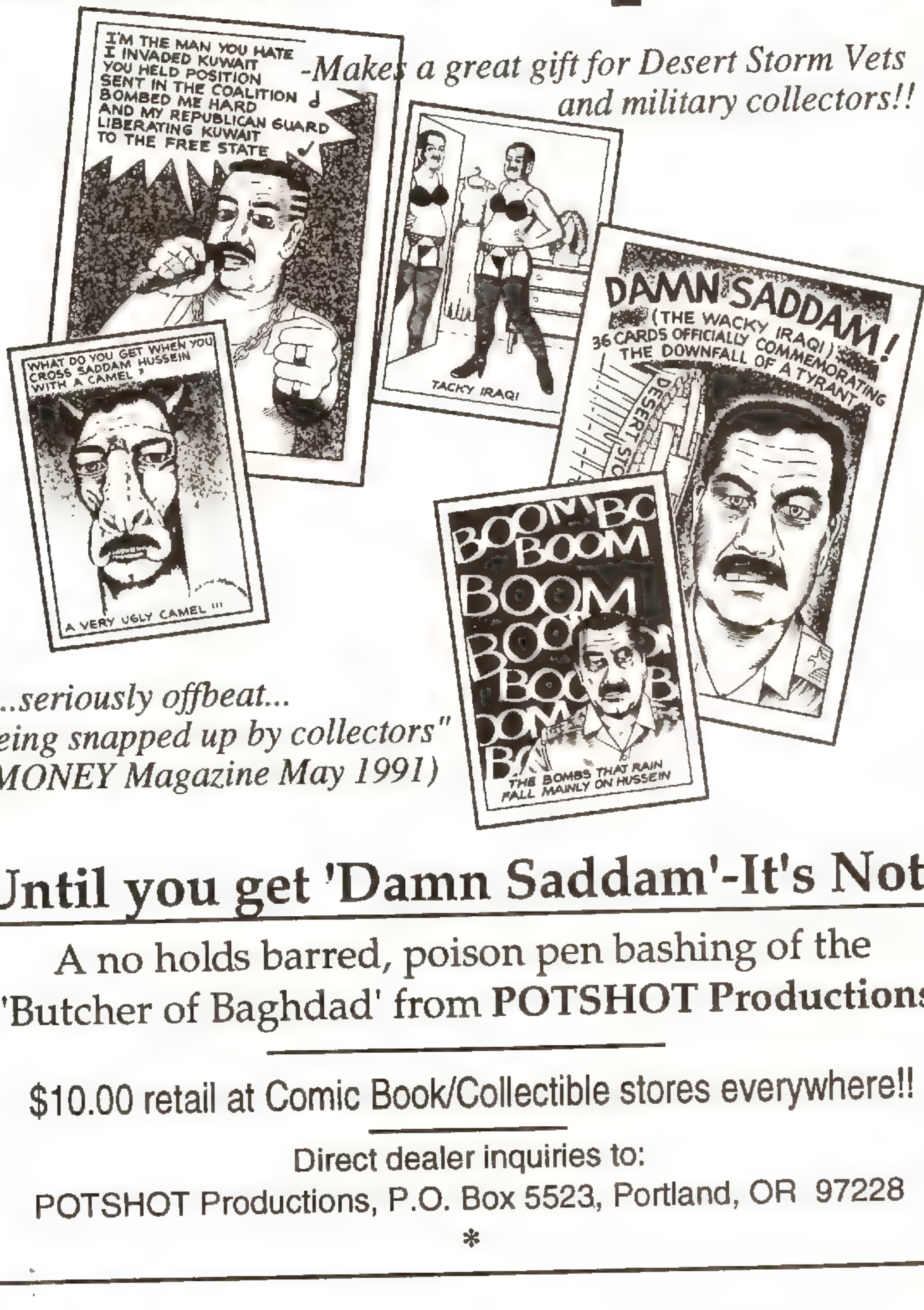
I'M THE MAN YOU HATE
I INVADED KUWAIT
YOU HELD POSITION
SENT IN THE COALITION
BOMBED ME HARD
AND MY REPUBLICAN GUARD
LIBERATING KUWAIT
TO THE FREE STATE
WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU CROSS SADDAM HUSSEIN WITH A CAMEL ?
A VERY UGLY CAMEL !!!
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"I was glad when I was given IRON MAN."

that, it's almost natural that they're all going to look pretty much the same. It's a lot like handwriting, that sort of thing

LOU: *You were also working for companies like Dell and Gold Key doing stuff like ON STAGE and VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA. What was that like?*

DON: Doing the adaptations was a little bit rougher, because you really don't have the time to get the character down right. You're trying to draw portraits and some people are a little more gifted at it than others. You really had to do a caricature of the person, in order to be able to draw them, panel after panel. I was having trouble with Napoleon Solo That's why I was glad when I was given a regular character like Iron Man.

LOU: *Iron Man was your first superhero and he was a relative newcomer; TALES OF SUSPENSE was more a monster book with a superhero in it. Tell me something about Iron Man and what it was like to do that title.*

DON: It was fun to do, especially in the beginning. There were two characters, Happy Hogan and Pepper Potts, that I enjoyed doing. To me, Happy was a pug, so it was great.

LOU: *Happy was always one of my favorite characters.*

DON: I had fun with them. And Tony Stark was the man-about-town type of thing, so that worked out fine. There was more characterization at the time and I had more fun with it. That was the first time that I started to work with getting a synopsis. The synopsis usually wasn't even that much, at times it was just discussed over the phone.

Don, as drawn by John Buscema in 1968's AVENGERS ANNUAL #2. Short story written by Roy Thomas with inks by Giacoia.

-ULP!- THAT MUST BE RASCALLY ROY ON THE PHONE!
FOR A CHANGE, I'D EVEN BE GLAD TO TALK TO HIM--
--BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GONNA BE TIED UP FOR A WHILE...!
OH WELL, AT LEAST IT'S BY THE X-MEN THIS TIME!
JING
3

LOU: *One of the things I noticed about your IRON MAN work was Tony Stark's look and all of the beautiful people, the movie-star look you set up. I recall when IRON MAN always had a great deal of tragedy and pathos.*

DON: That was **Stan Lee's** thing, he was thinking of HAMLET and stuff like that. You knew that at any time he could die, his heart could go out on him, stuff like that. That to me is a hell of a lot better than, say, the TERMINATOR in movies, that no matter what you did to him, you couldn't kill him. Movies like FRIDAY THE 13TH — you hit him with an axe and nothing stops him. I much more like the fact that you can have a character die; that's the type of character that I like

LOU: *I know Tony Stark was about to die from a heart attack about every fifth issue or so. In the '60s it seemed like every issue of IRON MAN he would clobber a Commie supervillain. How did you like beating up on the Commies?*

DON: That didn't bother me, they were just villains. Back in the '40s it was the

IN THE WINK OF AN EYE, ALL PEDLAM SEEMS TO BREAK LOOSE AS THE TAC POWER-SUIT TEAMS OF SUPER-FOES ATTACK EACH OTHER, WITH A WINNER AND LOSER FOR ONCE ACCEPTED THE FIGHT SEE-SAWS BACK AND FORTH UNTIL...
MAKE WAY!! MAKE WAY FOR WONDER MAN!
10

Here's a panel from Don's very first AVENGERS issue. This is #9, from October of 1964. Dick Ayers is the inker.

WE'RE A LITTLE BIT STUBBORN

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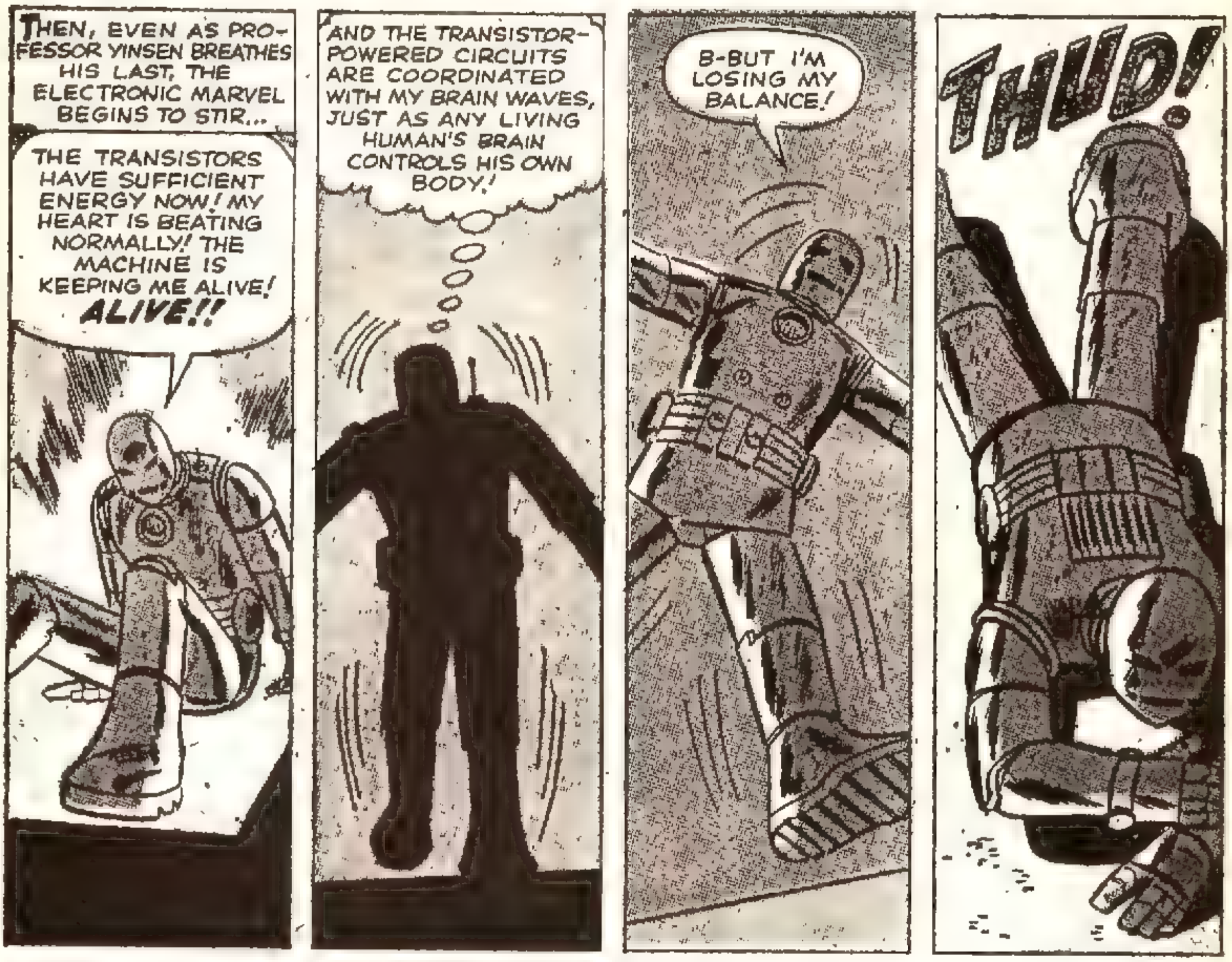
"Most scripts wouldn't have the writer's name."

From TALES OF SUSPENSE #49, Iron Man's first appearance, 1962. Heck both pencils and inks.


THEN, EVEN AS PROFESSOR YINSEN BREATHES HIS LAST, THE ELECTRONIC MARVEL BEGINS TO STIR...
THE TRANSISTORS HAVE SUFFICIENT ENERGY NOW! MY HEART IS BEATING NORMALLY! THE MACHINE IS KEEPING ME ALIVE! ALIVE!!
AND THE TRANSISTOR-POWERED CIRCUITS ARE COORDINATED WITH MY BRAIN WAVES, JUST AS ANY LIVING HUMAN'S BRAIN CONTROLS HIS OWN BODY!
B-BUT I'M LOSING MY BALANCE!
THUD!

Japs or something like that. Today, I guess it's **Saddam Hussein.** There's always going to be a villain somewhere. That's why I always remember **Jack Kirby,** talking about the Sandman. It was like people going to the beach and all of a sudden there's a wind storm, and a guy gets up and walks away and it's the Sandman. He walks away and under the beach is a garbage dump. That's the way **Kirby** used to think. He really did a terrific job on creating most of those characters.

LOU: *One of my favorites from the '60s, which you did, was Ant Man. I remember the scripts which were done by Ernie Hartz, he did the first Porcupine story and the origin of the Wasp. I remember those stories as being really well written. They were like THE THIN MAN but with superheroes. What can you tell me about that work and about mystery man Ernie Hartz?*

DON: Actually, I don't remember Ernie — it may have been a pseudonym for someone else. I know you're expecting me to say some spectacular thing about Ernie but the truth is that, in those days, the script would come in the mail. Most of the time you would get the script and not even know who the writer was. Even today I sometimes will get something from Marvel and it won't even have the writer's name on it. You get it in the synopsis form and then send it back to somebody, you don't even see it in the final stage until it sees print.

LOU: *What was it like working on Ant Man?*

DON: It was fun because it was completely different. All of a sudden you're wondering how are you going to draw this thing, where you can see the things that he sees. It always had to be something where you looked up at the people, past Ant Man, and towards the other guy. You had to get a relationship between something small and large and you also had to put something close by to give a gauge, like a matchbook or something, so that when you looked down all of a sudden the other character took most of the panel and Ant Man was small. **Jack Kirby** had already started it, so I had stuff to work from.

LOU: *You did a good job with it, especially drawing the Wasp.*

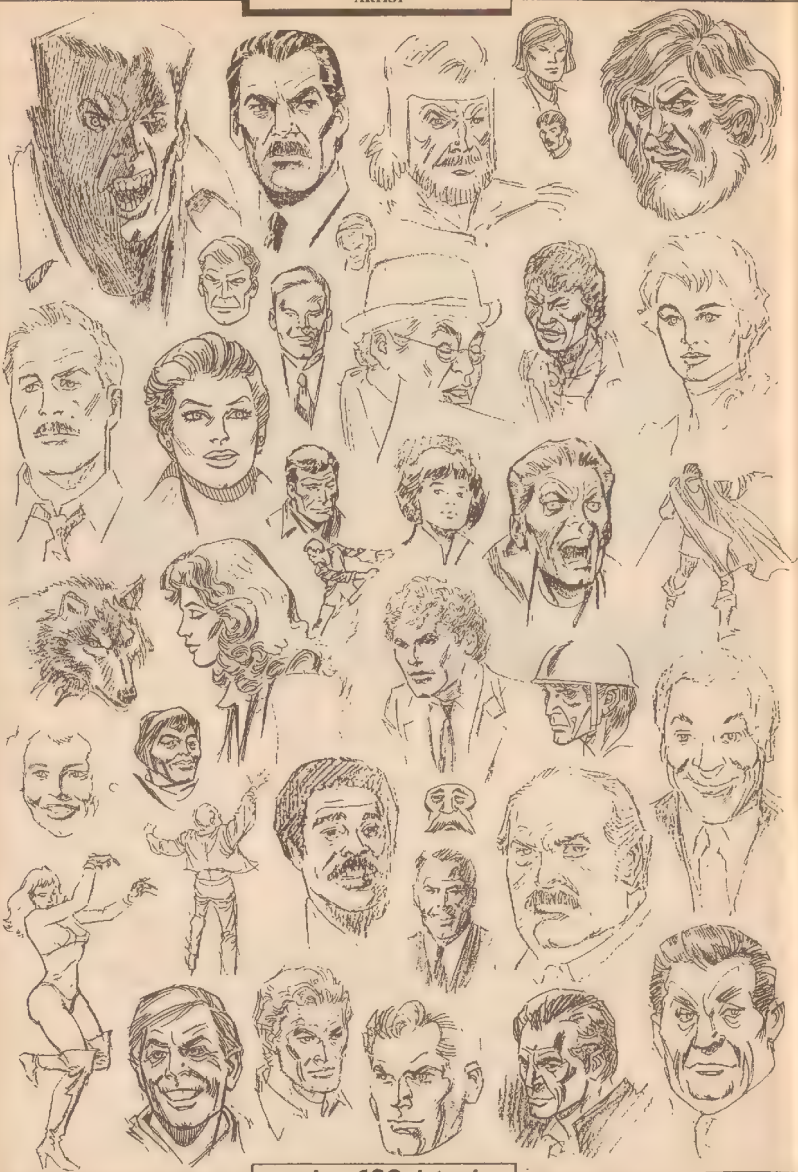
DON: When I first started drawing girls I couldn't draw them worth a damn. I always liked the **Caniff** stuff, you know, Burma, the Dragon Lady, and stuff like that. I always ended up keeping that right next to me at the drawing board. I didn't copy it, but when I would see something that was really pretty, that was what I would try to do. I tried to model from movie stars like **Ava Gardner,** who had a pretty good-looking face.

LOU: *Another series that comes to mind, THE AVENGERS?*

DON: That same type of thing, I got a phone call that says, "Guess what, you're going to be doing THE AVENGERS next month." I guess they already had eight issues done by **Kirby** so I had something to work from. I guess the first issue I did was #9.

LOU: *Did you have to ask who was in THE AVENGERS?*

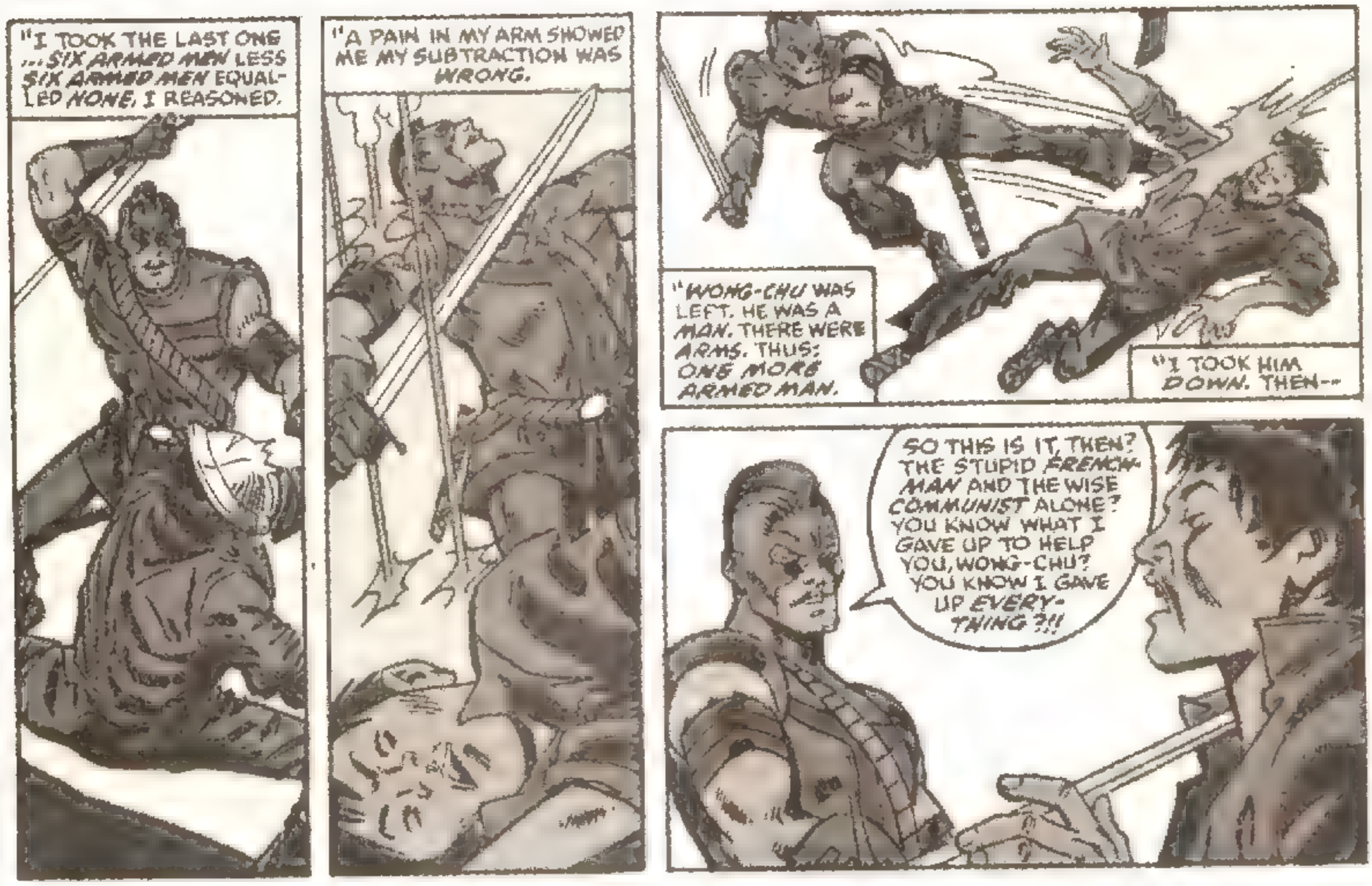
DON: No, they would just send you the stuff and you would start working on it. I



©1991 Donald Heck

Collage of various character studies from Don's personal sketch book. "Can you recognize any of your favorites?"

"You just start to feel stale after a while."


"I TOOK THE LAST ONE ...SIX ARMED MEN LESS SIX ARMED MEN EQUALLED NONE, I REASONED.
"A PAIN IN MY ARM SHOWED ME MY SUBTRACTION WAS WRONG.
"WONG-CHU WAS LEFT. HE WAS A MAN. THERE WERE ARMS. THUS: ONE MORE ARMED MAN.
"I TOOK HIM DOWN. THEN--
SO THIS IS IT, THEN? THE STUPID FRENCHMAN AND THE WISE COMMUNIST ALONE? YOU KNOW WHAT I GAVE UP TO HELP YOU, WONG-CHU? YOU KNOW I GAVE UP EVERYTHING?!!

"Once there was a Swordsman . . ." from AVENGERS SPOTLIGHT #22, September, 1989. Story: Lou Mougin. Pencils: Don Heck. Inks: Heck and Marzan. On the next page, various pencil images from the same issue.

had done a few of the characters before. At that point, for me, superheroes were no big deal anymore. I had been working from a synopsis for a few years, so I had it down pretty good.

LOU: *AVENGERS was one of the first strips that Roy Thomas made a name for himself with — what was it like working with Roy?*

DON: Same thing, I never saw the guy. I really didn't have any problems with anybody. Just send me a script or a synopsis and I would work from there. Later on, when they became a little more well-known with the fans, then they would start to say, "This or that isn't right."

LOU: *Yes, right, continuity.*

DON: As they became bigger, it became an entirely different situation. But that's normal. You can start to go crazy with that stuff. Anyone can sit down afterwards and say what you *could* have done with it.

LOU: *John Buscema replaced you on AVENGERS and you ended up doing a plethora of strips like CAPTAIN MARVEL and IRON MAN again.*

DON: Basically, whatever they sent me I wound up doing. I never knew what the hell I was going to do or who was going to ink it. That was the fun part of it. Guys would come up to me and say, "When I first started, I got to ink you," and I would say, "Yeah, I remember that one." *(Laughter.)* I'd get stuff back years later, when they started sending the art back, and I didn't even recognize some of the stuff. What I used to do was make Xeroxes of my stuff before sending all of it off.

LOU: *Around 1970 you went over to DC and did some nice stuff on DETECTIVE COMICS with Batgirl?*

DON: Yes. Actually, that was 1972, I think.

LOU: *Also some work for LOIS LANE, I remember. What got you back to DC and what was it like working there?*

DON: I don't know for sure — I guess I just wanted a change. You start to feel stale after a while. It was a different scene at Marvel at that point. There were a bunch of new guys and I felt like I was getting a little short-changed. I decided to see if I could get any work over at DC. Someone said they might be interested, so I went there. I remember that at Marvel I was going to do some book, and they were going to put an inker on me that I wasn't thrilled about, so I said, "No, forget it." I went over to DC for a couple of years.

LOU: *In the mid-70s you came back to Marvel, at least partially.*

DON: It was one of those things, it wasn't working as well at DC as I wanted, so I went back to Marvel. I had seen Marvel's production manager, **John Verpoorten**, a few times at these meetings they used to have, when they were trying to start artist groups . . .

LOU: *Like ACBA . . .?*

DON: Yeah, so I went to a few of those, and they asked me to come back to Marvel.

LOU: *In the late 70s you gravitated back to DC again . . .*

DON: I wasn't happy with some of the stuff I was getting at Marvel. I felt like I was getting short-changed again, so I talked with **Vinnie Coletta** and he said they were willing to give me a contract at DC. I didn't have a contract with Marvel at the time.

LOU: *You were still freelancing?*

DON: Right, and I never knew when the next job was coming. I went back to DC in 1977; I stayed with them until a couple of years ago.

LOU: *I remember a lot of the features you worked on at DC — TEEN TITANS, FLASH, JUSTICE LEAGUE, BATGIRL, and SUPERGIRL . . .*

DON: And WONDER WOMAN, for about three years.

DON HECK

"I don't have a great love for THE COMICS JOURNAL."

LOU: *You inherited JUSTICE LEAGUE from George Perez and Carmine Infantino, just in time to do that last super complicated crossover among the Justice League, the Justice Society, and the All-Star Squadron.*

DON: I remember one job when that was just crazy — you had Superman, Wonder Woman and two or three other superheroes. I said, "Come on, one guy opens the door, the other goes through it, the next one opens the screen door, and someone does something else." I mean, it was damn stupid; one character alone could have whipped the villain, himself. You had Superman, what the hell did you need all of the rest of them for? It ended up that each one had to do something. To me it became foolish and silly. Plus the fact that if you're working late at night and you wake up early in the morning, you find out you put the wrong stars on this guy, that sort of thing. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *You once again ended up at Marvel. Was that about the time your contract ran out at DC or what?*

DON: Yes, and all of a sudden they didn't have any more work for me. It was just one of those things. I asked for more work and they would say, "We'll see," and I said, "Uh oh." The funny part is that, the year before, an editor at Marvel called me and wanted me to do some work and I refused because I didn't want to push off from DC. I had been getting steady work out of them. I said, "Gee, if I go and do the other work they may get mad and then I'll get nothing." It happened that way anyway, so I called up to see if I could get back at Marvel; I had no choice at that point. The guy from Marvel who had called me originally was **Mike Higgins,** and at about the point I had wanted to go back to Marvel he had left. I sort of felt like a black cloud was settling over me.

LOU: *You were the regular inker on the HAWKEYE comic.*

DON: That was one of two jobs I did right after I went back there, I did the Hawkeye and the Swordsman story. I had to do both of them at once and I was surprised, myself, when I saw the story a year later — some of the stuff looked pretty good — because I had to rush that one and yet it worked out fine.

LOU: *What gives you the most pleasure out of your career as a comic-book artist?*

DON: I most enjoyed working on IRON MAN and TORPEDO TALES, it was fun to suddenly be doing these underwater adventures. It all depends on whether or not they had some character to it.

LOU: *Now don't forget to send your photo to David Hamilton, who's doing the layout on this interview.*

DON: Where is he from?

LOU: *Before COMICS INTERVIEW I think he used to work for Fantagraphics . . .*

DON: You mean **Hambone?**

LOU: *Yeah, that's right — you know him then?*

DON: I think I sent him a sketch once, and *not* because he was working for THE COMICS JOURNAL. *(Laughter.)* I don't have any great love for THE COMICS JOURNAL, not when the big cheese up there calls me the worst cartoonist in the world.

LOU: *I thought that was Harlan Ellison.*

DON: It was in that interview, but **Gary Groth** put the words in his mouth. The funny part was that the guy they were actually talking about was not me. In other words, the story they were referring to was something I hadn't even drawn.

LOU: *I don't believe in the character assassination interview anyway.*

DON: It's stupid; if you say you don't like my stuff, that's perfectly all right. But to call me the worst?

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THE COMICS INTERVIEW PORTFOLIO

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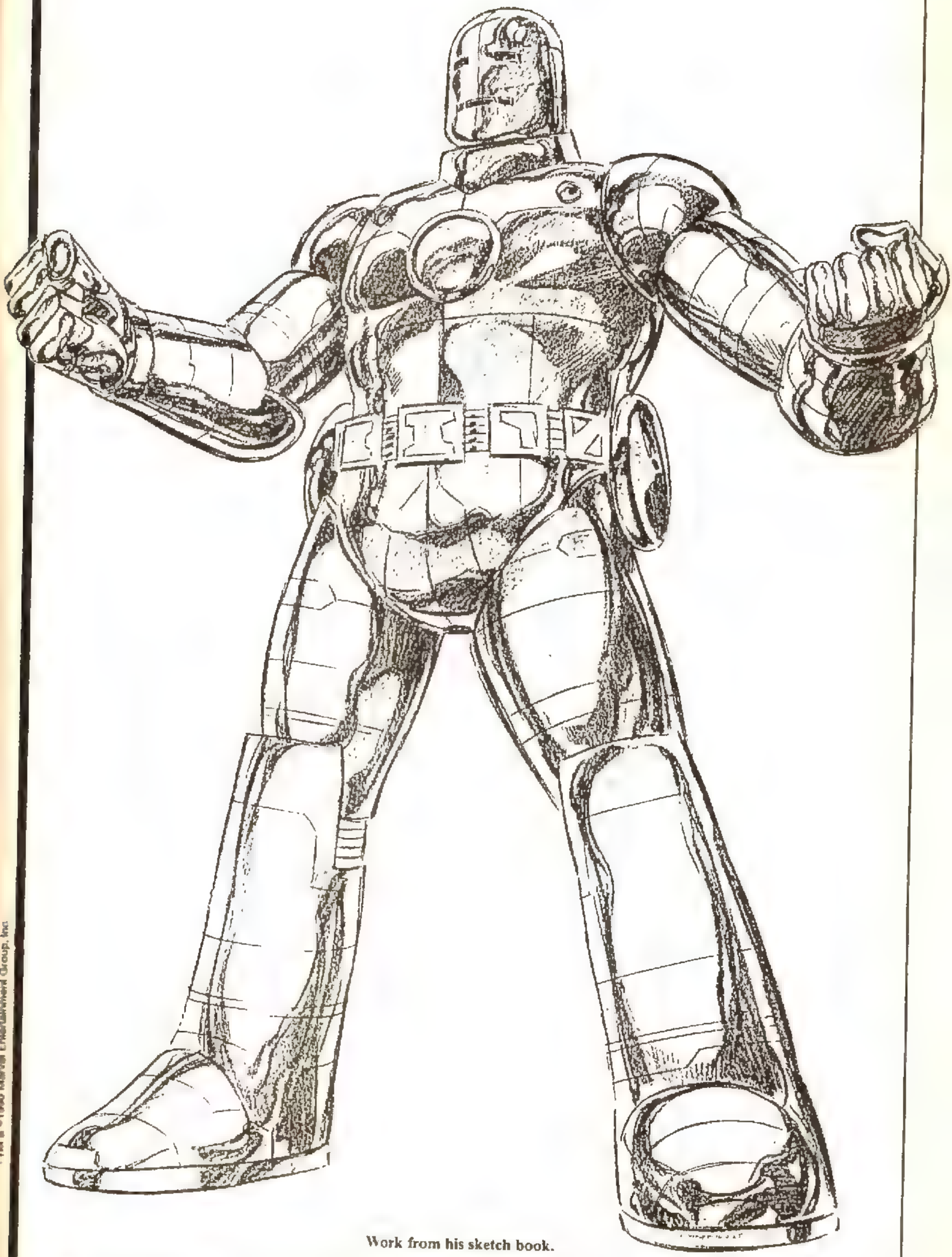
JLA/AVENGERS art. Shooter's refusal to accept the project "broke my heart. I lived for waking up to get started on those pages." So said George back in COMICS INTERVIEW #6.

Neal's 1985 version of the NEW X-MEN. Adams both penciled & inked this illustration.



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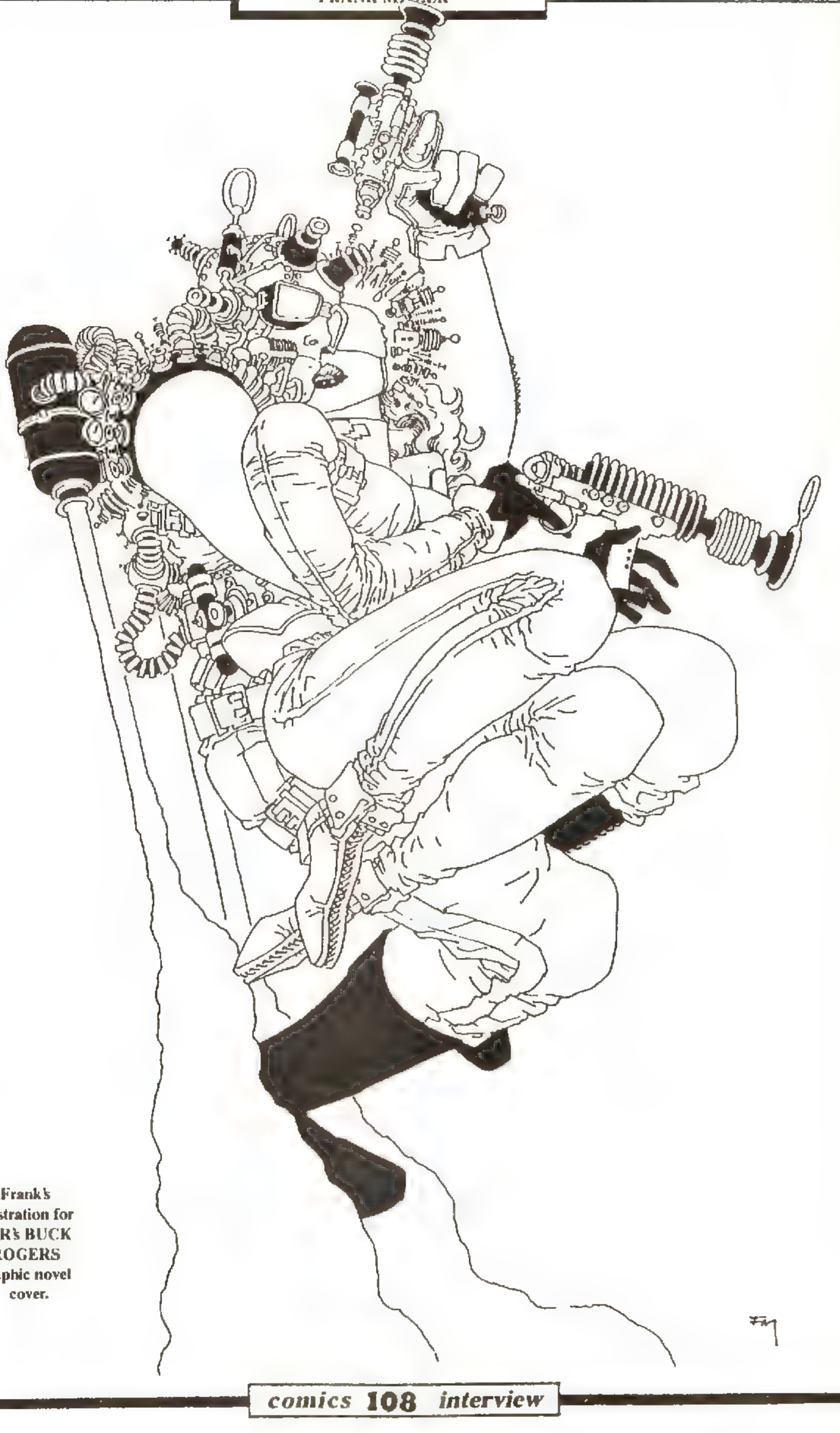
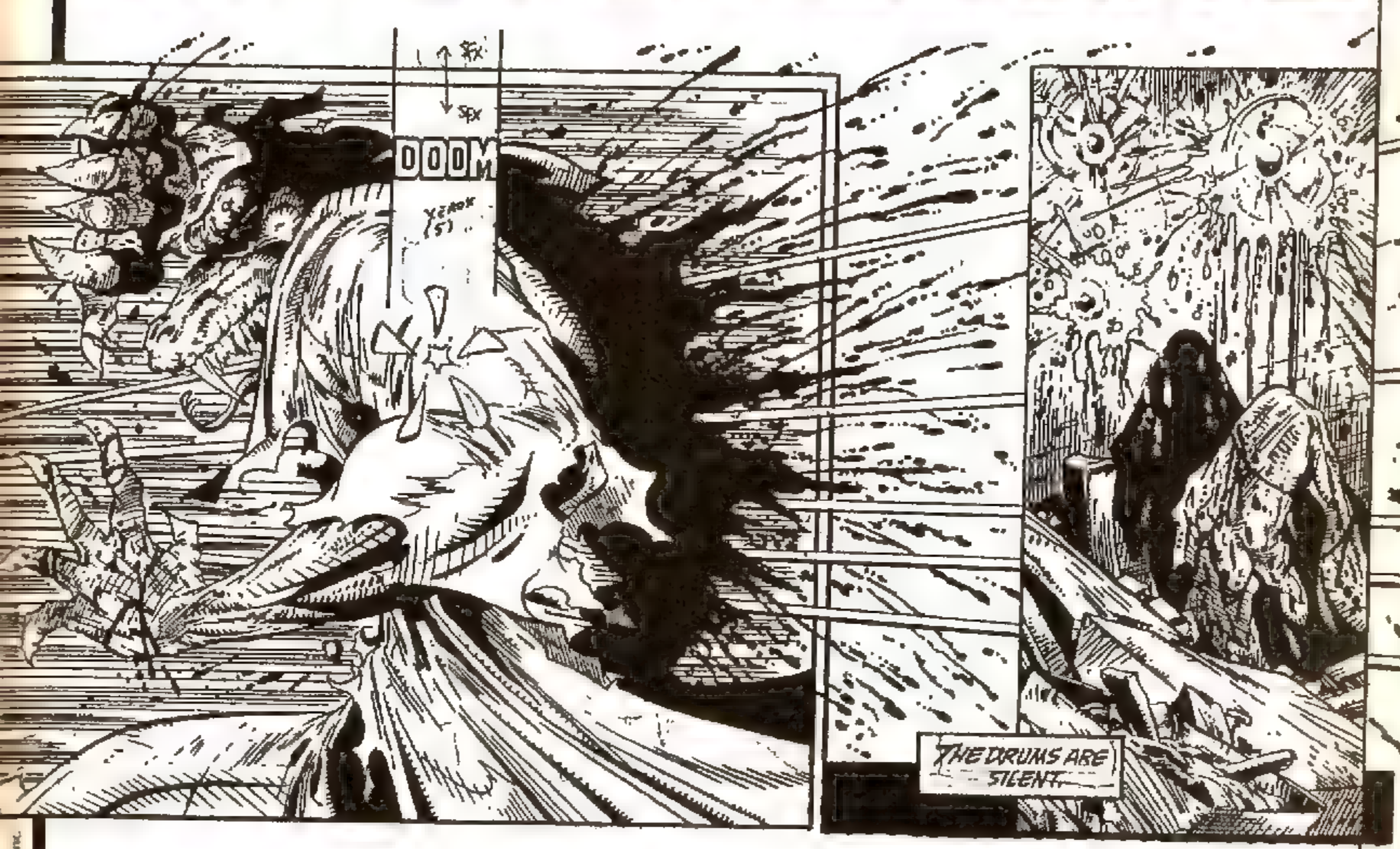
Work from his sketch book.



BUCK ROGERS TM & ©1990 Dl.e Family Trust

Frank's illustration for TSR's BUCK ROGERS graphic novel cover.

TODD MCFARLANE



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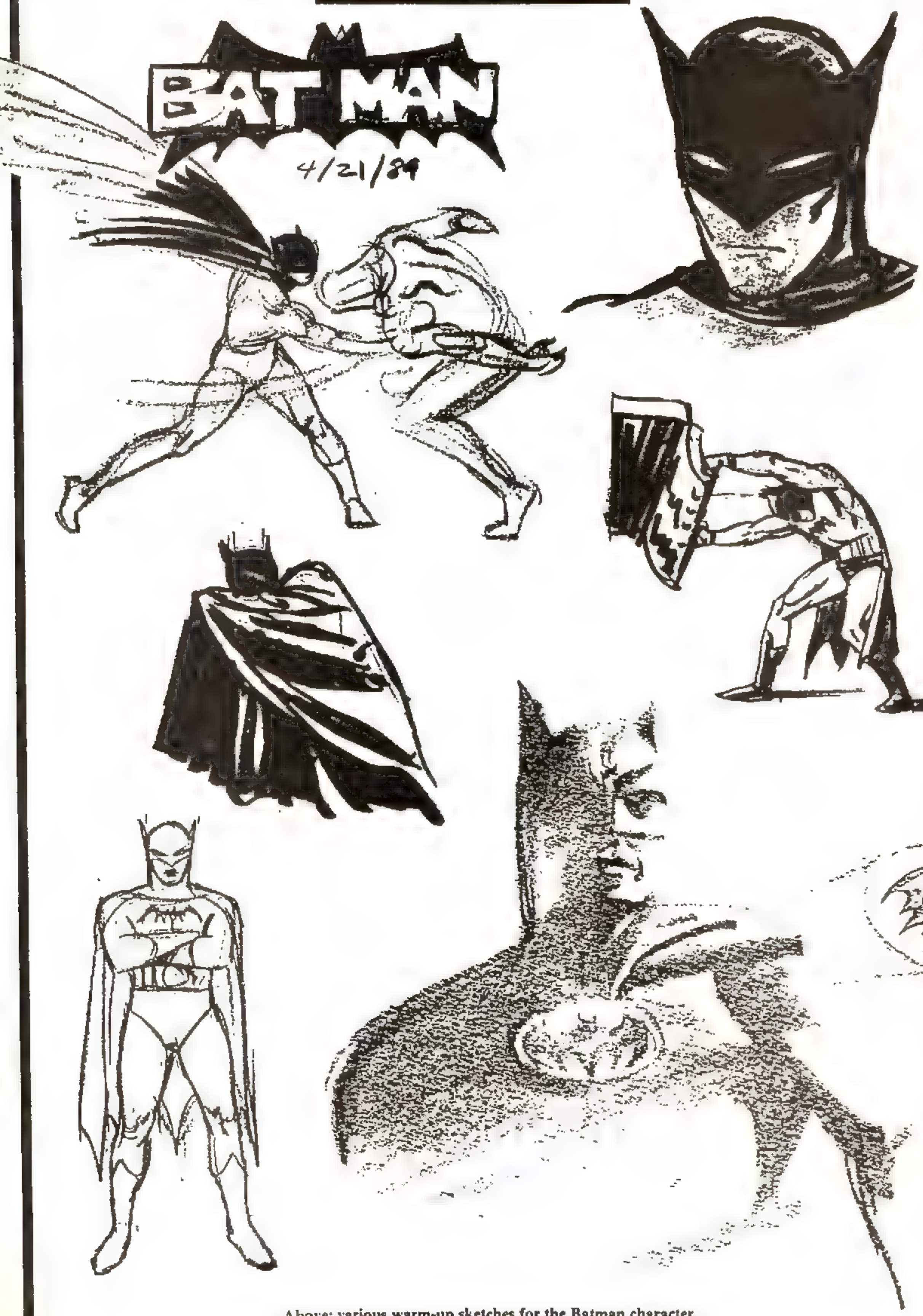

Above: various warm-up sketches for the Batman character.

The Batman ©1989 DC Comics, Inc

ARTWORK is © 1983-88 D HamBone & Jack Kirby / THE FOUR ARMED TERROR is © 1988 DC Comics, Inc / ARTWORK is © 1988 DC Comics, Inc

Jimmy Olsen's FOUR-ARM TERROR vs Marvel's HULK, by Jack "KING" Kirby.

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

FLO VADIS?
OR:
STAN LEE, JACK KIBBY & A NAKED WOMAN

Dear INTERVIEW:

Here is a question for you. I don't know if you can provide the answer — but maybe you can direct me to someone who can. In the mid '60s, when I was just starting to buy comics, I recall seeing a copy of a "men's" magazine with **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** and a naked woman and some drawings of Marvel characters in it (now there's a combination!). Now I know that Marvel and the men's magazines were owned/published by the same people, but I do not recall exactly the title of the magazine (JAGUAR??) or the woman's name (in my head I always think of her as Flo, but I think that is because Flo is the only woman I associated with Marvel Comics back then). I would really love to find a copy of this magazine. Do you know what I am talking about? (I am 99.9 percent sure it is not my imagination and that this issue exists.) If so, what is the name, number and date of the title? Also, where can I get a copy of it? Who handles such back issues? If you do not know the answer, can you direct me to someone who does?

Speaking of **Flo Steinberg,** I was in love with Flo as a kid. Just what is she doing these days, anyway? And where can I buy a copy of her BIG APPLE COMICS? I don't see it listed in the various price guides and most of the local comics-store people tell me that such a title never existed. Let's have another interview with Flo, and how about an interview with **Steve Ditko** (does he give interviews?).

J. Shingler
643 Marjorie Mae St.
State College, PA 16803

Back when I began COMICS INTERVIEW, I asked Steve to do an interview — figuring since it would be straight Q-&-A he could express himself exactly as he might wish, without concern for distortion of his views — but he preferred to let his work speak for him. If his opinion should ever indicate otherwise, Ditko is always welcome to say exactly what he wishes here in INTERVIEW. As far as Fabulous Flo, maybe one of these days she'll dash off an update on her current activities for the "Last Word."

Finally, the only Marvel/men's mag I really remember from that era is PUSSYCAT — which was a collection of b&w strips reprinted from several other magazines published by Martin Goodman. That doesn't exactly fit your description — but surely someone out there must be able to clear this up. Les Daniels, Don Rosa, Warren Reece, are any of you listening —?

— DAK

POWER 100:
PREMISE CHALLENGED

Dear Charles,

Your letter opened by asking several questions, to which please find my replies:

Have you ever speculated as to who really are the most influential people in the comics field?

No.

Or, more to the point, how they rank?

Definitely not.

If there were such a list, would you be on it?

I have no idea.

You then went on to make a few statements, some of which i cannot in truth endorse

As an industry insider [I am] one of the select few whose opinion counts.

I am inside the industry, yes, but there

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are hundreds of us, not a "select few," and I think my opinion is not more countable than many dozens or hundreds of other opinions both inside and outside the comics business.

This isn't a popularity contest; we're not looking for fan favourites. Let's face it, to make it to the top you [*i, we?*] *sometimes have to step on a few toes.*

This presumes that i (or you or anyone) is *trying* to make it to whatever or wherever it is you (have failed to) define as "the top." Even if i understand what it is you mean by "the top," i don't think i have to "face it" that one must hurt people to get there. This sounds like you are rationalizing away your own personal acquiescence with, belief in, or indoctrination into the hierarchal or dominator mode of existence. I simply don't care to follow your thinking here, and i particularly find your "let's face it" a weak and unconvincing argument. I could as easily (albeit with some lack of conviction, being an atheist) tell you that "you know in your heart" God plans to punish those who are prideful and who hurt others, so "let's face it," striving to dominate others puts your soul in jeopardy!

Being popular isn't a requirement for this list — having absolute power, the ability to make big things happen (or not happen) is!

That's twice now you say that "popularity" or being a "fan favourite" is not relevant to being on the list. Add to this your statement of belief that i must "face it" that gaining a high ranking in terms of influentiality or power requires hurting people. Are you working from an unconscious Aristotelian logic whereby being popular and favoured by fans and not hurting others precludes having power in this industry, and vice versa? If so, try to break free of this bi-polar logic. It is crippling.

In any case, no mortal human has "absolute" power. I believe King Canute proved that in his famous experiment with the tides. I shall take this as unfortunate hyperbole, then, and assume the second requirement ("making big things happen or not happen") is what you are truly driving at when you define power in the comics business.

You then ask me to name "the real movers and shakers" and "the people i feel are the real powers" in comics, and to explain why i hold those opinions. In short, you ask me to name those who can most often and for the most people make or not make big things happen.

There are two things that "happen" in comics. One: items get published and distributed. Two: people earn their livings and are thus able to survive and to reproduce. Those with the most power in comics, then, are those who make (or don't make) the most publishing events occur and those who employ (or cease to employ) the most workers. These two happenings, publishing and employment, are intimately linked in the comics field, because comics is a business run for profit.

To comment on this linkage may seem like simple sophistry to you if you are overly close to the comics business, but consider: In tribal societies, where wage-earning does not exist and therefore cannot be used to control the lives of others, power, if it even exists in the dominator paradigm you are interested in, must accrue through other avenues of hierarchal ranking. Likewise, even under a modern system of capitalism, were our field of endeavour rose hybridizing instead of comics, the ability to hire and fire would not be as sure a ranking of power as the ability to make good genetic choices, skillfully carry out pollenization, and perform basic propagation techniques on the resultant progeny. (One of the most influential and powerful rose breeders at this time, a man who has single-handedly changed current rose hybridization fads, works out of a 12-acre nursery, using only a handful of assistants. His ability to hire and fire is irrelevant because once any green-thumbed rose fancier is given a cutting from one of his plants, he or she can then continue to propagate and multiply it. In short, rose hybridization relies more on non-capitalistic events — the natural power of plants to reproduce and to grow — and less on capitalistic events — investment in new product lines, the exchange of money — than does comics.) Of course, the comics industry is not the most capital-driven of social fields: In the automobile industry, for instance, power is far more closely linked to the interplay of hiring and firing than it is to the design of new cars. But comics resembles the auto industry more than the rose hybridization industry, and certainly more than

COMICS INTERVIEW
PUBLICATIONS

May 3, 1991

WHO ARE THE REAL POWERS THAT BE?

Have you ever speculated as to who really are the most influential people in the comics industry--or, more to the point, how they rank? If there were such a list, would you be on it?

COMICS INTERVIEW #100 will be a guide to THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN COMICS!

That's why we need to hear from you--now! As an industry insider, you are one of the select few whose opinion counts. And that's why COMICS INTERVIEW wants your help.

This isn't a popularity contest, we're not looking for a listing of fan favorites here. Let's face it, to make it to the top you sometimes have to step on a few toes. Being popular isn't a requirement fot this list--having absolute power, the ability to make big things happen (or not happen) is!

Who are today's movers and shakers in the comics industry?

Please take a moment to jot down (the back of this sheet is fine) as few or as many of the people who you feel are the real powers--and why--and return it to us in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by May 15, 1991.

Sincerely,

Charles S. Novinskie

Charles S. Novinskie
Associate Editor
COMICS INTERVIEW

P.S. All responses will be kept confidential. If you would prefer to discuss the matter in further detail--or don't want to put what you really think in writing-- please include a phone number and times at which you can be reached.

Above: The letter that went out to industry insiders.

a non-capitalist tribal society, so i therefore will discuss power and influence in the comics field in terms of capitalism, not aesthetic novelty.

I would venture to state that in any capitalistic industry those who have the discretion to hire and fire the largest numbers of workers (and thereby produce or not produce the largest number of manufactured items) are the people with the most power. In short, the greatest amount of power in the comics industry as it is structured under capitalistic principles, accrues to those at the top of the largest employment pyramid. I hesitate to name names, but people like **Steve Ross** at Time-Warner come to mind. The people at the top of the DC-Time-Warner employment pyramid, or the Marvel-Whoever-Owns-Them-This-Month employment pyramid could cause more people to lose or gain a livelihood than anyone else in this business if, for instance, they decided to disband DC or Marvel completely or instead to double their publishing capacity.

These, then, the capitalists who run the largest comics manufactories, are the people in this industry with the most power to "make or not make big things happen" — but please take note of the fact that despite the large influence they wield over their own employees, they cannot cause me or other Eclipse employees to gain or lose employment or to publish or not publish comics; they have no direct power over us because we are simply not in their pyramid of employment. For this reason, i am frankly not interested in ranking them. To do so would be as relevant to my work as to spend time deciding whether Thor is more powerful than The Hulk.

In closing, allow me to again remind you (for i fear you are letting hierarchal thinking and Aristotelian dichotomy rule your perceptions to an untoward degree) that your attempt to rank people in this industry according to their power and your presumption that all or some people want power over others in this industry and are willing to hurt others to gain it do not apply to those of us who seek to work with partnership models of behaviour and who value co-operative equality more than rulership.

catherine yronwode
Eclipse Comics
Forestville, California 95436
U.S. of A.

POWER TO THOMPSON: SHUT THE FUCK UP

DAK —

I liked the "Pot Calls Kettle Black" subtitle on **Kim Thompson's** bullshit letter in #97 re: YUMMY FUR. God! How many X-MEN interviews are they going to jump at to get further sales for Fantagraphics and AMAZING HEROES in the present and future? All I can say is **Kim Thompson** should shut the fuck up and get on with doing his magazine in the best possible manner. Is he worried about COMICS INTERVIEW stealing sales from AMAZING HEROES? I'm not defending you, **DAK,** for your editorial in question from **Thompson.** I'm just glad I do not send my interviews to him for publication. As I said before, I do them for fun ('cause you don't pay me . . . in money, at least). Doing work for Fantagraphics and **Thompson's** snobbish attitude would not be fun for me. No way!

A final question: When is the **Kotsky** interview going to see print?

Paul Power
Los Angeles, CA

As I'm sure you've noted with satisfaction, Paul, the Kotzky interview can be found right here in issue #100 — immediately following that of Will Eisner, for whom he once worked. As for the sentiments expressed in the rest of your letter, what can I say but: 'nuff said!

— DAK

INTERVIEW welcomes your thoughts and comments in the Last Word. Send your correspondence to: DAK, COMICS INTERVIEW, 234 Fifth Ave., Suite 301, New York, NY 10001, or fax your letter to (404) 782-6625. Please include your name and address.

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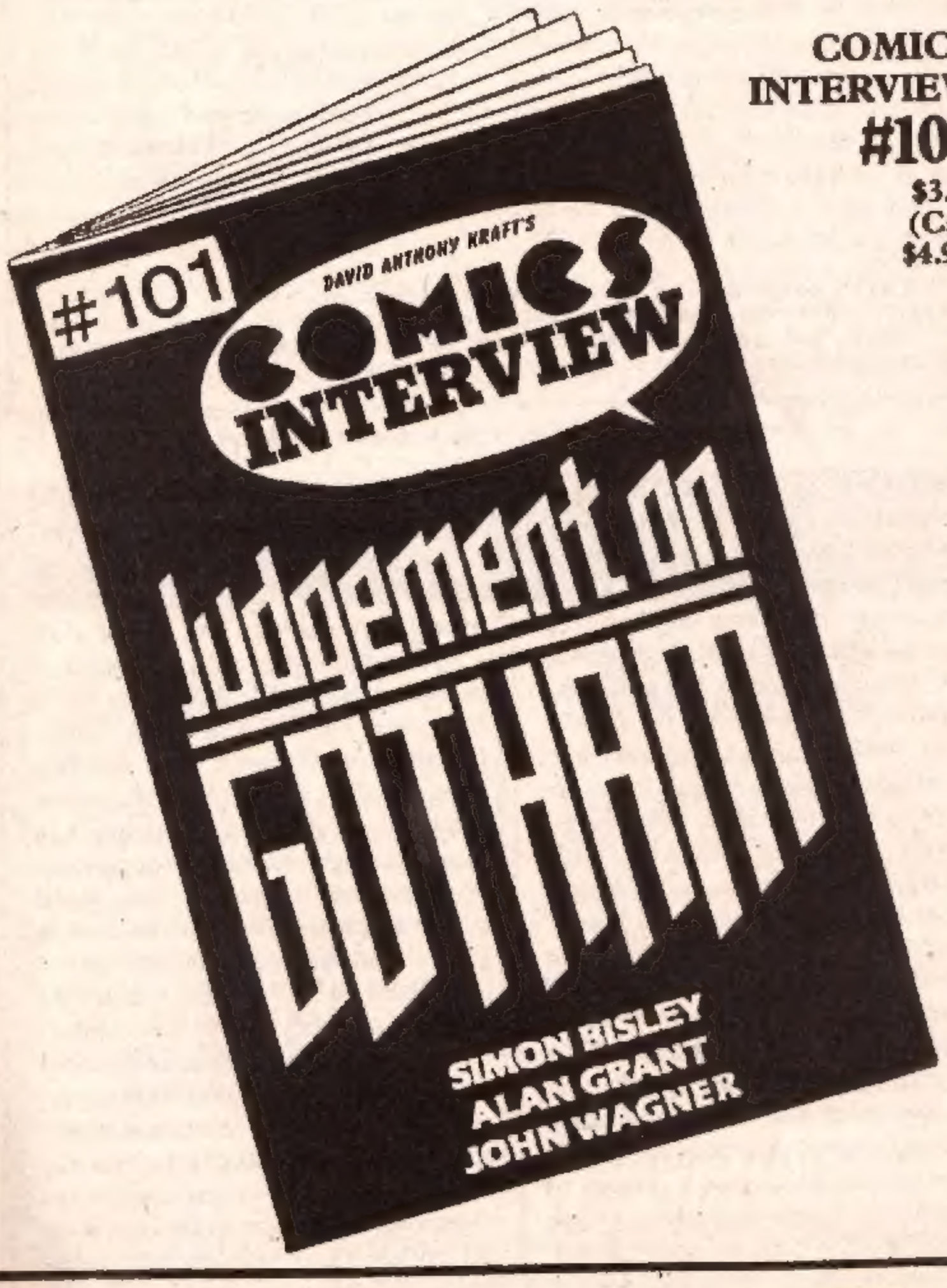

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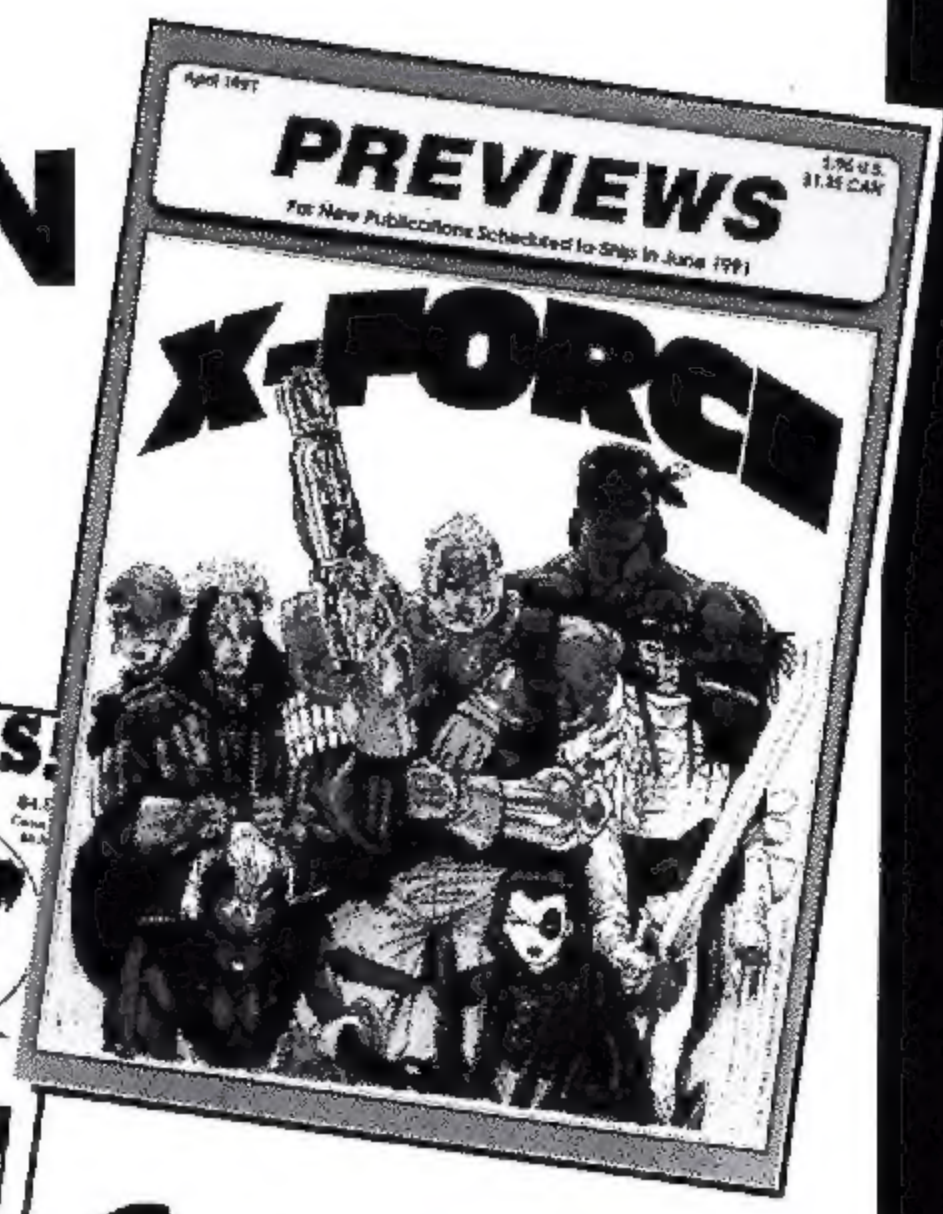

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